

Ulster University  
School of Applied Social and Policy Sciences

**Right-wing parties in power and immigration: causes and mechanisms of  
policy change in the UK, Switzerland and France between 2002 and 2015**

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Ulster  
University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Belfast, March 2018

I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100, 000 words

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## **Acknowledgements**

My first and biggest gratitude is to my supervisors Dr. Markus Ketola, Prof. Cathy Gormley-Heenan and Dr. Ciaran Burke, who always made me feel equal and whose excellent support and guidance got me through this academic journey. I would like to thank Dr. Simon Usherwood for agreeing to be my external examiner and to prof. Duncan Morrow for their useful comments and suggestions that helped me to refine my work. Among Ulster staff, I would like to especially thank professor Arthur Aughey for his academic input in my British case and his efforts to liaise me with Conservative politicians, to Jackie Reilly and Carol Boyd, who made all the bureaucratic stuff as easy as possible. Many thanks to librarians David, William and Jennie, whom I countlessly tortured with document delivery requests. To all my colleagues in 2D02 and mostly to my friends: Naz, Allie and Ciara with whom we shared many struggles on late cold evenings in the office.

I am grateful to my family, my Mum Victoria for always believing in me and supporting me through this journey. I have enormous gratitude to my husband David, who has been my toughest critic, who suffered through the process of editing this dissertation, including correcting my English mistakes and formatting.

Professor Tim Bale deserves special attention as it was his work that sparked my interest in right-wing parties and immigration. I am deeply grateful to the expertise and support provided by professor Lea Sgier, whose comments on the Swiss case were extremely helpful. I also owe gratitude to professor Andrew Bennet, for his process tracing course and for his feedback on my work. I would like to thanks Dr. Emily-St. Denny and Dr. Emile Chabal for their invaluable input into the French case and also Charlotte Orgebin-Salmon from Regional Council of Ile-de-France for doing her best to liaise me with French politicians.

This research was supported by Vice-Chancellor's scholarship for which I am grateful. I am also thankful to the University Association of Contemporary European Studies (UACES) that funded my fieldwork in Switzerland.

My final gratitude is to my interviewees who made this research possible. To name a few: Vince Cable, David Metcalf, Edouard Philippe, Luzi Stamm, Thomas Aeschi, Ulrich Schluer, Hanz Fehr and many others who agreed to provide the insights into the black box of immigration policy-making.

## **Abstract**

This comparative study examines the reasons why right-wing parties in power in the UK, Switzerland and France changed their immigration policy stances between 2002 and 2015. The analysis of immigration policy change in each of the three cases suggests that the causes of immigration policy change are broadly the same, but the way these narratives are used by the UK Conservative Party, Sarkozy's Union for a Popular Movement and Swiss People's Party are different and context-dependent. This thesis explores factors exogenous to the party that influence right-wing parties' choices on immigration. With immigration becoming a key issue on the political agenda in Western Europe and beyond, it is crucial to explain what drives right-wing parties in power to toughen their stance on immigration as it signals both the revival of nationalism and party system change. This research brings contributions to three different literature strands: party politics, public policy and the literature on Euroscepticism.

The analysis of semi-structured elite interviews with politicians, civil servants, special advisors, representative from of interest groups, which examined work, student and family migration routes, has found that two factors were consistent across three cases: public opinion and economic anxieties, which underpinned their logic of immigration policy change. The differences across cases regarding the changing nature of parties' stances on immigration are demonstrated examining the effects of the EU integration, party competition on the right and identity anxieties. In addition to the importance of exploring structural factors that influence immigration policy-making, the research does not disregard the role of the agency and the findings demonstrate that one agency-related factor was crucial in explaining the evolution of British immigration policy: Home Office's ideological dogmatism.

Using process tracing analysis, this research identifies the mechanisms that account for this change. The analysis of semi-structured elite interviews demonstrates that framing



was a discursive mechanism that was prescient across all three cases. The procedural mechanisms, the mechanisms that actually accounted for immigration policy change varied across the cases. While departmental competition was a mechanism that led to the policy change in France and in the UK, in Switzerland direct democracy led to the evolution of immigration policy. By comparing three case studies, the research shed light on the differences in the responses of right-wing parties in power to immigration and pinpointed that political opportunity structures helped to explain this variation. The research has identified three facets of a POS that explain this variation: a party's attitude to the EU, the presence of a strong radical right competitor and citizenship regime.

The findings of this research are relevant for the various actors involved in policy making, including politicians, special advisors and interest groups by shedding the light on the process of immigration policy making in three cases. While this thesis addressed the decision-making processes of right-wing parties in power in relation to immigration, the implications for policy-making process can be extrapolated onto other policy areas. Actors involved in policy making can learn the significance of competition between different departments for making their policy choices to dominate.

## List of Abbreviations

<b>ACSE</b>	National Agency for Social Cohesion and Equality of Opportunities
<b>AUNS</b>	Campaign for Independent and Neutral Switzerland
<b>BIS</b>	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
<b>CAI</b>	Contract of Reception and Integration
<b>CCT</b>	Card of Competences and Talents
<b>CVP</b>	Christian Democrat Party of Switzerland
<b>FDJP</b>	Federal Department of Justice and Police
<b>EEA</b>	European Economic Area
<b>EKM</b>	Federal Commission on Migration
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FASILD</b>	Fond of Action and Support for Integration and Fight against Discrimination
<b>FDP</b>	Liberal-Radical Party of Switzerland
<b>FN</b>	National Front
<b>HCI</b>	High Council for Integration
<b>ICT</b>	Intra-company transfers
<b>IFOP</b>	French Institute of Public Opinion
<b>INSEE</b>	National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies
<b>MAC</b>	Migration Advisory Committee
<b>MIINC</b>	Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>MWUK</b>	Migration Watch UK
<b>NHS</b>	National Health Service
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>ONS</b>	Office for National Statistics
<b>POS</b>	Political Opportunity Structures
<b>SpAD</b>	Special Advisor
<b>SVP</b>	Swiss People's Party
<b>UDF</b>	Federal Democratic Union of Switzerland
<b>UKIP</b>	United Kingdom Independence Party
<b>UMP</b>	Union for a Popular Movement
<b>UUK</b>	Universities UK

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Rationale**

Political parties change their policies all the time because of a variety of factors, both internal and external. This thesis explores why right-wing parties in power change their positions on immigration, examining factors exogenous to the party that lead to subsequent immigration policy change. Immigration is one of the crucial issues facing political parties today, especially for the rightist parties. Europe and the world are witnessing the revival of nationalism and right-wing parties in power are becoming more radical in their approach to immigration. More restrictive immigration policies have become a feature of right-wing parties in power in Western Europe and beyond. Donald Trump's election as president of the United States illustrates that more radical ideas are entering mainstream politics and that there is a growing demand for such kind of ideas. Britain's exit (Brexit) from the European Union (EU), the acceptance of the Initiative Against Mass Migration in Switzerland and Marine Le Pen's success in the 2017 presidential elections all highlight the growing scepticism towards the EU and immigration in general. Right-wing parties in power have played a key role in the launch of the Initiative Against Mass Migration and in the launch Brexit referendum. One explanation is that this is happening because nationalist parties across Europe are gaining more electoral ground, which increasingly worries established mainstream parties, both on the right and on the left of the ideological spectrum. Even without making it to government, radical right parties have become significant players on political arena by politicising issues like immigration, economy and security (Mudde, 2012). Growing public support for such parties has an impact on the behaviour of mainstream parties that are trying to prevent the alienation of their electorates. Political discourse and the policies of established parties are shifting further to the right, which demonstrates the 'right turn' in European politics (Alonso & Da Fonseca, 2012: 875). However, the impact of radical right is not the only explanation of why right-wing parties in power change their

policy stance and this thesis seeks to investigate what are the other factors that explain this change.

Immigration has become a key issue in politics partly due to the politicisation of immigration by radical right parties (Van Spanje, 2010; Abou-Chadi, 2016). With growing support for the radical right across Western Europe, immigration has become a highly prominent issue on the political agenda. The nature of the debate around immigration has changed a great deal partly due to the electoral rise of radical right parties, which have played a major role in politicising immigration by associating it with high unemployment rates, welfare dependency and high crime rates (Schierup et al., 2006: 97). However, it would be wrong to assert that right-wing parties are adopting more restrictive immigration approaches only because of the electoral growth of radical right (Akkerman, 2012b; Alonso and Da Fonseca, 2012). There are a variety of factors that lead the right-wing parties in power to change their immigration policy stances and this research aims to trace these factors and uncover the causal mechanisms that account for this change.

Various factors could be leading to immigration policy change in each country, dependent on the context, yet there would appear to be pan-European concerns around immigration. Among the challenges that immigration poses to sovereignty, identity and welfare concerns come to the forefront. Europeanisation of national immigration policies combined with the widening of the EU present sovereignty concerns to European nation states. Support for the Europeanisation of immigration policy is diminishing among states and their electorates, while nation-state sovereignty in immigration matters is seen as increasingly important: “With the emergence of European political community that has diminished national sovereignty at a time when global forces are also undermining nation states, both Europe and migration become linked as sources of instability” (Delanty, 2008: 676).

Furthermore, cultural and social questions have arisen as a response to the widening of the European community, linking immigration with anxiety about social security and welfare (Delanty, 2008). Immigration has adopted a negative connotation in European discourse and became linked to new social security issues as national welfare states of countries are facing change (Schierup et al., 2006: 36). Immigration has become intertwined with social security concerns, with radical right parties being at the origins of this. Front National (FN) in France, United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the UK, Dansk Folkeparti in Denmark and others have been promoting 'welfare chauvinism', arguing for limitation of immigrants' access to social welfare benefits (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990). Nordensvard and Ketola (2014: 16) point out that: "the new rightist discourse therefore argues that social policy should be directly linked with an ethnic and sovereign nation state". Radical right parties view immigrants as a drain on their welfare systems and in this way immigration becomes connected to social policy. The popularisation of ideas linking EU, immigration, welfare and security as sources of uncertainty is not any more a distinctive feature of radical right parties, but has become a key issue on the agenda of right-wing parties in power.

This is a comparative case study that explores the causes of immigration position change of right-wing parties in power in three country cases and traces the mechanisms that account for the change. Process tracing method was used as a method of within case analysis to uncover the causes and mechanisms of immigration policy change (Beach and Pedersen 2013; Bennet and Checkel 2015; Goertz and Mahoney 2012). The evidence of immigration policy change comes from a series of semi-structured elite interviews conducted with political elites, civil servants and non-governmental actors including pressure groups and academics. The main emphasis was on getting access to politicians of three right-wing parties in power, however getting access to other actors involved in immigration policy-making was also crucial for corroborating the evidence given by politicians in their interviews. Elite interview data was analysed thematically,

using a two-cycle coding technique (Saldaña, 2009). An elaborated discussion of methods, data collection and data analysis is presented in chapter three.

## **1.2 Gap and contribution**

### *Gap*

Whilst there is now a vast literature on the radical right, there has been less attention paid to the rightward moves of right-wing parties, despite the much greater policy importance of the right (Bale, 2008). As a large part of the previous research (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Carter, 2005; Akkerman, 2012, 2015; Mudde, 2013; Van Spanje, 2010; Van der Brug et al., 2005) has given considerable attention to how radical right parties have influenced the immigration debate, it has disregarded the role of right-wing parties in power in immigration policy change. The radical right has been increasing immigration salience, yet right-wing parties in power have been more responsible for this anti-immigration turn because of the implementation more restrictive immigration policies (Mudde, 2013: 12). Existing research has largely focused on radical right parties and immigration, while the role of right-wing parties in power in politicising immigration and bringing it to the forefront of mainstream politics, has been mostly ignored. There is a lack of qualitative research on how right-wing parties in power form their immigration stances. As Bale (2008: 317) highlights:

It is about time, however, that we turned the telescope around and, trained it, too, on the parties that have a more direct impact on public policy at and beyond the level of the state. In this respect, parties of the centre-right [...] have enjoyed nowhere near the scholarly attention of their more radical counterparts, are an obvious point of departure.

The right-wing parties has been far more important in shaping immigration policies across Europe because of its decision-making power, being either in government or in a coalition with other parties, having a direct effect on immigration policy making (Schain, 2006). While existing scholarship has focused more on the demand side, addressing electoral support for conservative parties and the factors that lead to the successes of parties, supply side explanations that examine the right-wing parties' positions and the reasons behind their change stances on immigration remain limited. More detailed



literature review is incorporated in each country case in chapters four, five and six. Therefore, this study contributes to filling the gap by examining the role of right-wing parties in power in immigration policy change in the UK, Switzerland and France.

#### *Scope of the study*

Despite the fact that immigration has become a concern for established parties on both sides of ideological spectrum (Bale et al., 2010) and both left and right parties are increasingly incorporating it into their agenda, this thesis examines right-wing parties in power, but not left-wing parties. There are two main reasons for such selection. First, immigration constitutes a vital part of right-wing ideology and this issue has been primarily of interest and ownership of right-wing parties in power, as they are seen by voters as more credible than mainstream left with regard to immigration (Alonso and Da Fonseca, 2011: 3-4). Politicisation of immigration poses more electoral threat to right-wing parties because it is one of the core issues as “their ideological *raison d’être* is to defend national security and national communitarian values” (Akkerman, 2012: 516). This is not to say that left-wing parties do not suffer from the voter defection when it comes to immigration, it is also “experiencing pressure from their traditional working-class constituencies to be tougher on immigration and issues of law and order” (Zaslave, 2006: 10). While immigration still remains an important issue for the left, due to “a tension between representing the interests of the native working-class and wider concerns about social justice” (Duncan and Van Hecke, 2008: 434), left parties are less susceptible to losing voters over immigration because immigration is not the priority issue for them and because left is not seen as credible on immigration as the right are. Therefore, right-wing parties in power are more likely to pursue the implementation of restrictive immigration policies. Finally, as immigration and welfare become intertwined, it is more plausible to examine the right parties rather than left as the economic basis of the right is largely anti-state, with a liberal view on welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1990). On the other hand, left-wing parties are more prone towards expansive welfare state and it is more hazardous for them to reframe welfare policies as it will threaten their essence. The intersection

between changing nature of welfare state and nationalism is more evident on the right of the political spectrum, than on the left.

### *Contribution*

Even though this research's primary focus is on right-wing parties in power and immigration, it aims to bring contributions to three different literature strands: party politics, public policy and Euroscepticism literature. This research is timely because it helps to explain the general European shift to the right through one of the key lenses: immigration. The goal is to explain why right-wing parties in power are changing their stances on immigration by elucidating those key factors which have led three conservative parties to do so between 2002 and 2015. This research contributes to the current debates on the variance of the European approaches to immigration in Western Europe, by drawing on the similarities and differences in the evolution of immigration policies within three European countries - the UK, France, and Switzerland – as a consequence of the interplay between local, national and European politics. Understanding why parties change their positions on immigration is important because the adoption of more restrictive immigration positions has a profound impact on party system, erasing the distance between radical right and right-wing parties in power on this issue and shifting them to the right.

First, the contribution to research on party politics sheds light on the role of the right-wing parties in power in explaining immigration policy change. This thesis contributes to the literature on party position change by identifying causes associated with immigration policy change. More precisely, it contributes to the external tradition, which emphasises the importance of exogenous factors in explaining the change in party's positions and policies. By testing existing theories on party policy change, this thesis aims to explain what accounts for variation in parties' responses to immigration. Furthermore, the goal is to link the research on party politics with research on immigration policy. Those scholars, who work in the field of migration, tend to focus on a variety of actors that influence policy choices (Bale, 2008: 315), which includes "interest groups, courts, ethnic

groups, trade unions, law and order bureaucracies, police and security agencies, local actors and street-level bureaucrats and private actors” (Lahav and Guiraudon, 2006: 207). Various actors influence immigration policy-making, yet researchers have omitted the role political parties play in it (Duncan and Van Hecke, 2008: 434). There is a gap in the literature regarding the role of political parties in shaping immigration policy as “those who study migration do not focus much on parties, while those who study parties tend to focus on migration only insofar as it affects electoral competition and positioning, the role of political parties in immigration control and integration policy has been underestimated” (Bale, 2008: 315). The aim of this research is to link immigration policy studies and party politics literature to examine how political parties influence immigration policy and examine what other causal factors apart from the party competition drives right-wing political parties to change their immigration stances.

Second, the project contributes to the literature on public policy as it also aims to trace causal mechanisms that account for immigration policy change. Therefore, it explains how particular policy preferences dominated over the other ones, it examines policy determination and explores the interaction between different political actors in the policy-making process: governmental departments and administrative institutions, which fall within public policy literature. Apart from examining the causal factors that allowed political actors to make certain policy decisions, the research explores causal mechanisms through which the change has occurred. Thus, the study not only tests the presence of hypothesised causal mechanisms, extracted from the literature on mechanisms, but also contributes to the identification of new mechanisms such as departmental competition and direct democracy, derived from data analysis. Furthermore, this research brings contributions to the public policy area by identifying causal factors that contributed to the policy change and causal mechanisms that accounted for that change. As Afonso (2014: 568) successfully pinpoints: “if the outcome of this change in policy positions has been extensively documented, however, its *causes* and the *processes* leading to it remain unclear”. There has been some research done

on causal factors leading to party policy change (for example, Adams et al., 2004; Adams et al., 2006, Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Harmel and Janda, 2004; Harmel and Tan, 2003), but there has not been much research (Afonso, 2014) on identifying causal mechanisms that account for this change. Thus, this research aims to trace mechanisms that account for immigration policy change. Identification of mechanisms pertinent to immigration policy can also be useful for future research, which can test their presence in the explanation of policy change in other areas of public policy.

Third, the project makes a contribution to the literature on Euroscepticism (Boomgarden et al., 2011; Kuhn, 2012; Meijers, 2017; Usherwood 2013; Usherwood and Startin, 2012) examining how the anxieties about the EU lead to immigration policy change in three cases, especially such Eurosceptic parties as the Conservative Party in the UK and the Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) in Switzerland. Furthermore, it explores the impact of supranational forms of regulation on the development of immigration policies in three countries by addressing the respective roles of the EU and nation states in shaping immigration policy (Geddes, 2003). At the same time it also demonstrates how such critical junctures as Brexit in the UK and the Initiative Against Mass Migration in Switzerland are changing the political landscape and how domestic policy changes affect the relationship with the EU. Finally, this research also brings added value to the emerging scholarship on Brexit, which has so far focused on the quantitative approach in explaining support for it (Clarke et al., 2017; Goodwin and Heath, 2016; Goodwin and Ford, 2017; Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017), producing qualitative research and pointing out how Conservative's party changing immigration stance has been at the origins of Brexit referendum.

### **1.3 Case selection and timeframe**

Before proceeding with the case selection justification, the clarification of the research's goal should be elaborated. The nature of this research is to yield explanations of immigration policy change in three country cases by pointing out to causal factors that lead to the change and by tracing causal mechanisms responsible for this change. This

thesis explains why the right-wing parties in power change their policies on immigration and the answer to this question lies in these three cases. Even though parties adopted a more restrictive approach to immigration, which led to subsequent immigration policy change, parties' responses to immigration were not identical and varied across the cases. This research also explains what accounts for the variation in parties' responses to immigration issue in the UK, Switzerland and France. One of the goals of this research is not only to spell out why all three cases with different characteristics arrived at a similar outcome, but also to explain what accounts for varieties in approaches to immigration in three European countries. Explaining variation is crucial because it allows to expand the explanatory power of the findings by pointing to the factors that lead to the existence of this variation.

#### *Case selection*

The UK, Switzerland and France were chosen because they exemplify the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies in old European democracies with significant migrant populations. Thus, the UK and France share colonial past, which resulted in a substantial number of immigrants coming to these countries. Switzerland, is an interesting case because twenty-five percent of its eight million population are foreign (Federal Statistical Office, 2017). Furthermore, and as chapters four, five and six demonstrate in some detail, recent events point to the increased anti-immigration attitudes both within the political establishment and general public. Euroscepticism has been growing in all three cases and a big part of this is because of immigration. UK voted to leave the EU in July 2016, Switzerland voted against mass EU migration in February 2014, the popularity of National Front in France is growing and that its leader Marine Le Pen being the second top candidate in the first round of presidential elections and scoring almost 40 per cent of the votes in the second round (Clarke and Holder, 2017). Immigration policies have undergone considerable tightening between 2002 and 2015. The cancelation of the post study work visa for international students in the UK and France, the introduction of financial requirement for spouse visa in the UK, banning the construction of minarets in Switzerland and introducing automatic expelling for non-

Swiss offenders are just some examples how immigration policies have changed. The selection of these typical cases was made with the aim of providing generalisations for other cases that share similar attributes such as post-industrial democratic states with free elections and substantial migrant populations.

These cases were selected because, despite the evidence that right-wing parties in those countries adopted more restrictive immigration positions over time, the environment in which these parties operate differs on two major levels, which are important for understanding the development of immigration policies: relationship with the EU and citizenship regime. One of the goals is to trace how these characteristics influence on the way political parties alter their immigration stances if they do at all. First, the cases vary in terms of their citizenship regimes, which are crucial for explaining the incorporation of identity anxieties into the evolution of the immigration policies in three cases. Three countries belong to different citizenship regimes, which create opportunities or constraints for political parties to use identity theme in their immigration discourse and policies. Thus, Switzerland and France belong to an assimilationist type of regimes, the UK refers to multicultural regime. Here, it is important to emphasise that all three countries are multicultural in nature with immigration inflows from diverse countries, but they differ in terms of their integration approach, which is described by the citizenship regime.

Switzerland and France both relate to assimilationist model, though with some differences. While France is a part of civic-assimilationist model, combining a “civic conception of citizenship and assimilationist view of cultural obligations” (Guigni and Passy, 2004: 59), Switzerland belongs to the ethnic-assimilationist model, which requires “assimilation to the norms and values of the national community on the ethnocultural basis and tend to exclude those who are not entitled to sharing its norms, values and symbols” (Guigni and Passy, 2004: 58). The assimilationist model brings identity concerns to the forefront of the immigration discourse. UK is different from Switzerland

and France and belongs to the multicultural citizenship regime, where immigrants are allowed to 'maintain their distinctive cultures and form ethnic communities, providing they conform to national laws' (Castles and Miller, 2009: 45). Thus, multicultural citizenship regime creates less opportunities for political parties to have identity anxieties dominate their immigration discourse. It does not completely take identity out of the equation, but it can constrain the choices of political parties, when it comes to immigration discourse and policy change. The differences in citizenship regimes help to explain the attitudes of right-wing political parties in power towards integration, which is an important facet of immigration policy-making that is also included in this research.

Second, countries vary with the regards to their relationship with the EU. Country's relationship with the EU affects the development of its immigration policies. Being part of the EU means that national sovereignty over certain issues can be limited and that countries could be bound by the EU legislation to act in a particular way. EU legislation by creating adaptational pressures generates certain anxieties towards the EU and right-wing political parties are known to be quite skeptical on this issue. For example, one of the areas, where EU exerts influence is free movement of people, which has been a heated topic in recent debates in Europe. UK, Switzerland and France were selected as cases for this research because they differ in their connections to the EU and this research aims to trace if this can explain the variety of responses to immigration issue in three cases. Thus, UK is an EU member state that is characterised by Eurosceptic attitudes, when it comes to the Conservative Party. The country has always had a special relationship with the EU, having doubts about its membership in the European Economic Community (EEC). Its membership in the EEC was first questioned in 1975 referendum and recently, in the historic 2016 referendum, where the UK decided to leave the EU. Switzerland is not part of the EU, has never been and does not have any plans to join it in the nearest future, but is part of the free movement of people and has access to EU's single market for most of its industries. Despite not being a member, the SVP's hard-core Eurosceptic discourse is a dominant theme in immigration debate in Switzerland.

Finally, France has always been a Europhile country, by and large having a positive stance towards the EU, being one of its core founders and one of the key players, who views Europe as a platform to exert its influence (Drake, 2011). Selecting cases that share some important characteristics, which include type of citizenship regime and relationship with the EU is necessary to examine if these differences play any role in the variety of the responses of the right-wing parties on immigration in three cases.

#### *Time frame*

This study examines the period between 2002 and 2015, based on the country case and on the occurrence of critical junctures in Switzerland, the UK and France. First, in Switzerland, in 2003 SVP became the largest party in National Council for the first time in Swiss history and since then has established itself as a major player on the Swiss political agenda. As immigration was one of the cornerstones of SVP's programme, since 2003 Swiss immigration policy has undergone major transformation in a more restrictive direction. Despite the consensus character of the Swiss political system, SVP managed to transform immigration policy not only through the parliamentary arena, but also using the instruments of direct democracy. Second, the UK presents a puzzling case because the Conservative Party's position on immigration has become increasingly restrictive between 2005 and 2015 despite the pledges of its then new leader David Cameron to transform the party's image. In 2005, Cameron signalled the decontamination strategy of the Conservative Party, which needed to become more attractive for a broader electorate as it had been seen as too right-wing on issues like Europe and immigration in particular (Bale, 2010: 284). However, once the party managed to get reelected in 2010 and formed a Coalition government with the Liberal-Democrats, the Conservatives made a u-turn on immigration, toughening its immigration discourse and subsequently immigration policies. Hence, it is interesting to trace the reasons behind this position and subsequent policy change. Finally, with the appointment of Nicholas Sarkozy as minister of the Interior in France in 2002, who was notoriously tough on immigration, his approach focused on decreasing the immigration inflow and on introducing tougher integration



policies towards foreigners, in particular, Muslims. During his time as president of the Republic between 2007 and 2012, French immigration policy became even more restrictive, targeting the reduction of all immigration inflows, including students and introducing the so-called 'burqa ban' in public places in 2010. Overall, all three cases have experienced their respective conservative parties adopting a tougher immigration stance, which subsequently led to more restrictive immigration policies. This research explains why it has happened.

With reference to a broader political climate, the timeframe is chosen because certain big scale events contributed to the growing salience of immigration and made it one of the key topics in political debates. First, the events of September the eleventh 2001 in the USA cannot go unnoticed because they brought a shift in perception of certain categories of migrants, having an impact on the perception of Muslims in the Western world, which contributed to the rise of Islamophobia and backlash against multiculturalism (Castles and Miller, 2009: 15). Furthermore, important changes have been happening on the European arena as well. The 2004 EU enlargement welcomed ten new countries, which substantially increased the EU's population by 75 million (European Commission, 2009). The accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 contributed to the already existing tensions in certain European countries like the UK, especially with regard to labour migration. Finally, the 2007-2008 global financial crisis has unfolded and brought recession across the world, having a negative impact on labour markets and bringing economic insecurities, which manifested in decreasing economic growth and rising unemployment (Hemerijck, 2013:1-2). The new millennium has brought a new set of challenges that influenced the immigration positions of right-wing parties in power. This thesis traces the changes that were responsible for the shift in immigration approach of the Conservative Party, UMP and the SVP.

#### **1.4 Research questions**

The research aims to explain the logic underpinning the rightward shift in immigration policy stance of three right-wing parties in power: Union for a popular Movement (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire: UMP) in France, The Conservative Party in the UK and the SVP in Switzerland. It seeks to answer the following research question: *Why have right-wing parties in power changed their immigration policy stances and shaped immigration policy in a more restrictive way in the UK, Switzerland and France between 2002 and 2015?*

Immigration policy also includes an integration aspect, as integration constitutes an important part of the immigration issue and drives immigration policy changes in Switzerland and France in particular. It should be underlined that asylum is not included in the analysis as it represents a separate legal framework. This research question is further divided into two sub-questions.

The first sub-question asks: *What are the key factors which have led three European right-wing parties in power to change the tone of their immigration policies between 2002 and 2015?* Here, the aim is to trace the causal factors with the research focusing primarily on exogenous factors leading to policy change, however still accounting for internal ones. The justification for focusing on external factors is made in chapter two.

The second sub-question asks: *What causal mechanisms account for the immigration policy change in three country cases?* In other words, in what way are these causal factors translated into more restrictive immigration policies and why do some policy choices prevail over others?

#### **1.5 Concepts: right-wing parties in power and immigration policy**

This subsection briefly defines the major concepts of the research question. The goal is to clarify what is meant by them in this particular study. This allows for a better

understanding of the selection of right-wing parties and for the specification of immigration policy change.

In this research, right-wing parties in power are defined as right-wing parties that have the largest electoral support among other right-wing parties and that have been in government before, or are in government now, either in coalition or solely. It is important to clarify what is meant by right-wing parties in power in this thesis because if in the case of UK and France there is no doubt that the Conservative Party and the UMP are right-wing parties in power, yet the case of Switzerland poses certain questions. The Swiss People's party is often described mostly as radical right wing (Skenderovic, 2009) or populist radical right (Afonso & Papadopolous, 2015; Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2016) because of the nature of its rhetoric on immigration, which is profoundly nationalistic. Despite this important characteristic, this study views the SVP as right-wing parties in power in the sense that it has been the largest party in the Swiss political arena since 2003, scoring its biggest electoral success at that time and being the biggest party in Swiss parliament since. SVP is identified as mainstream because it has been the most popular party with Swiss voters for more than a decade.

The definition of immigration, given by Messina and Lahav (2006: 9), is "the movement of persons across national borders for purposes other than travel or short-term residence". However, this definition is broad and includes different categories of migrants. This research only focuses on legal migration routes: labour, student and family migration, including both EU and non-EU migration. It deals with legal migration as addressing the question why political parties have restrictive positions towards illegal immigration is in part self-explanatory, while the explanation of why right-wing parties in power introduced more restrictive approach towards legal migration routes is more puzzling.

Furthermore, it also examines changes in integration as it is an important facet of immigration policy that deals with migrants' acceptance of and by the host society. Immigration and integration are interconnected because sometimes certain aspects of integration need to be fulfilled as conditions for future immigration (Groenendijk, 2011). Furthermore, the success of integration can determine a country's attitude towards prospective immigration policies. Especially in societies that follow less multicultural, but more assimilationist approach, integration is significant in understanding the logic of immigration policy-making. This thesis does not include asylum policy as it is a different legal domain and is a matter of separate study.

### **1.6 Limitations of the research**

This research has the goal of explaining immigration stance change of right-wing parties in power between 2002 and 2015 by examining factors exogenous to the party that nonetheless do influence parties' positions on immigration. It also explores causal mechanisms that account for this change in three cases. It is important to clarify the scope of the research as there are certain limitations to what it can cover. First, recognising that political parties change their policy positions because of both external and internal factors, this study focuses mainly on external factors, aiming to provide contribution to the structural theories on party policy change. However, it recognises the importance of the agency in producing policy change and this is highlighted in the case of France and the UK. Second, this research is not looking at the policy change cycle as a whole, but only focuses on the agenda setting cycle, examining the formulation of the immigration policies. Third, by focusing on right-wing parties in power, this research does not examine the impact of other actors like interest groups, business associations, courts, ethnic groups, trade unions, security agencies (Lahav and Guiraudon, 2005: 207). Where it was possible, interviews with major interest groups that were involved in the process of policy formulation, were conducted, but actors other than political parties have not been the centre of this study. Fourth, this research explored the immigration policy agenda setting from the perspective of a party as a whole, but does not delve into

a discussion on intra-party dynamics on immigration, as the focus of this explanation is on structural factors and not on agency-related ones. Finally, this study demonstrates that the immigration stance change of right-wing parties in power led to a major political development in the UK: Brexit - referendum on Britain's exit from the European Union (EU). But as Brexit happened after the interviews were conducted and originally Brexit has not been included in the timeframe of the research, it does not examine the evolution of Conservative Party's stance and subsequent immigration policy change after 2015.

### **1.7 Roadmap**

Having introduced the rationale for the study, gap, research questions, hypotheses, case selection and brief description of the main concepts in this chapter (**chapter one**), the thesis proceeds in the following manner. **Chapter two** reviews literature on party policy change and literature on political opportunity structures (POS) and provides the operationalisation of factors that contribute to party policy change. Its innovative character seeks to combine political opportunity structures theory and theories of party policy change. It also revisits the broader social science problem of structure versus agency, not aiming to answer this fundamental problem, but emphasising that in the case of immigration policy, structural factors give a more complete insight into the change. **Chapter three** examines the methods used in this research, explaining the use of a comparative case study approach with process tracing as a within case method of analysis. Furthermore, the chapter delves into the discussion of the data employed in the research. After theory and methods have been laid out, the thesis proceeds with the empirical analysis of three country cases: the UK, Switzerland and France. It commences with the case of the Conservative Party and the evolution of the British immigration policy, which is explored in **chapter four**. It delves into the discussion of the Conservative Party's immigration discourse change in opposition and the evolution of the British immigration policy under the 2010-2015 Coalition government. By focusing on the role of the Conservative Party, the chapter also discusses the impact of some interest groups on the immigration agenda-setting of the Conservative Party and on the

Coalition government. In addition to testing exogenous factors, the analysis of interviews also points to the Home Office's ideological dogmatism, which was an agency related factor that led to the introduction of restrictive immigration policies. Process tracing establishes the presence of two mechanisms that accounted for the change: framing and departmental competition. **Chapter five** examines the evolution of the SVP's immigration stance and their role in toughening of immigration policies in Switzerland. It explores how the consensual model of Swiss politics provided extra-parliamentary venues for the SVP to use the direct democracy mechanism to influence the development of Swiss immigration policy using a bottom-up approach. The chapter also highlights that, despite not being a member of the EU, Swiss immigration policy has been facing adaptational pressures from Europeanisation. These anxieties have been repeatedly used by the SVP in their discourse and led to acceptance of the Initiative Against Mass Migration, which has endangered the cooperation between Switzerland and the EU. Finally, it explores what drove the changes in integration policies, which can be described as primarily anti-Muslim. **Chapter six** analyses the evolution of immigration policies in France under right-wing UMP and Sarkozy's presidency. It demonstrates that Sarkozy's preoccupation towards immigration was not only directed towards the limitation of family migration, but also focused on cultural integration of immigrants, mainly Muslims, with a failure to target the socio-economic aspect of integration. The chapter points out that Sarkozy's pledges in reducing 'unqualified' family migration and increasingly highly skilled labour migration were not achieved as the global financial crisis unfolded. Finally, it examines how institutional reshuffle and competition between governmental departments led to the introduction of more restrictive policies, but also accounted for some gaps between policy demands and policy outcomes. These three core chapters of the thesis are structured in the following way. First, each chapter sets out the country's political context, then it proceeds with the analysis of factors that contributed to immigration policy change. After the causes have been laid out, the chapters proceed with the identification of the mechanisms. Each chapter points to the factors that influenced right-wing parties' positions on immigration and points out whether it was a combination of factors

necessary for producing a change. **Chapter seven** links empirical findings with theoretical scholarship by synthesising the findings from three case studies and demonstrates which causal factors were similar across the cases and draws certain generalisations. It also points out that the causes of immigration policy change are broadly similar in three cases, but with some variation, which is explained by four political opportunity structures (POS) that account for the variation in causal factors and causal mechanisms across three cases. **Chapter eight** reminds the reader about the focus of this research and provides a summary of findings. It spells out both theoretical and practical implications and demonstrates how new causal factors identified in this study can be tested in other cases of party policy change on immigration. This thesis concludes with offering some avenues for further research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Theory**

This chapter presents a combination of different theoretical frameworks that explain immigration policy change. It sets out theoretical underpinning of the thesis by reviewing social scientific theories of policy change and POS theory. It highlights how these theories help to explain why parties change their policies and what explains the variation in parties' positions across the cases. Before proceeding with the examination of specific theories, the chapter starts with the discussion of the 'agency versus structure' problem, which is a fundamental debate that deliberates whether agency or structure is predominant in shaping actors' behaviour. The first part of this chapter discusses the symbiosis between agency and structure as it is often hard to explain a change by accounting simply for either agentic or structural factors. While some factors might prevail, often it is a combination of both of them that leads to the change. Then, the chapter examines theories of party policy change and justifies why this research is focused on exploring external factors that lead parties to alter their positions, however still accounting for the role of the agency in immigration policy change. It also operationalises these external factors into independent variables, the factors specific to this research, the presence of which is to be tested in the case study chapters. The chapter continues on discussing how POS help to explain the variation in three cases and why it is useful. Finally, it concludes with a discussion of the causal mechanisms that account for the change.

#### **2.1 Role of exogenous factors in party policy change**

This research explains the immigration policy change from a standpoint that emphasises the importance of exogenous factors in producing the change, but before delving into discussion of these factors, the examination of one of the fundamental debates in social and political theory of 'agency versus structure' needs to be elaborated. This dualism serves as a broader basis for theories of party policy change because it explores whether



political parties influence the structure, the environment they are operating in, or the structure shapes agency, the choices parties make. The agency-structure problem posits that “instead of being antagonistic partners in a zero-sum relationship, human agents and social structures are in fundamental sense interrelated entities, and hence we cannot fully account for one without invoking the other” (Carlsnaes, 1992: 245-246). The agency, or the actor(s) actions are determined by structures that the actor operates within, while structure is not immune to the changes brought by the agency, therefore it is clear that one does not happen without the influence of another. International relations scholars argue that “single decision makers or small groups of decision makers - are surrounded by the factors that structure the nature of the decision, the options available, the consequences, costs and benefits of those options” (Most and Starr, 1989: 27, 29). Therefore, an actor’s decision(s) are not simply defined by the actor, they are based on the factors that are external to the actor in question - the structure.

Structure is something that is hard to grasp or define and there is no single definition that is agreed upon. Sibeon (1999: 142) states that “‘structure’ refers to the relatively enduring though not immutable circumstances within which actors operate”, which means that structure can also be understood with a reference to a wider context, in which actor operates, while Betts (1986: 41) underlines that actors are influenced, constrained or enabled by social structure or social conditions. The notion of ‘structure’ is vague, but it relates to something external to the actor, whether these are resources or rules and can be specified under the umbrella of ‘context’, in which the actor operates. This study emphasises that exploring the range of external, structural factors is necessary to explain party policy change on immigration because parties do not make decisions in the vacuum, but they need to account for what is happening around them.

Having emphasised that structure shapes the choices of the agency, the study does not disregard agency’s role, but it accounts for it in what the agency-structure problem presents a dualism, where “actions can transform structures and structures constrain actions” (Hollis and Smith, 1994: 243). This means that while actor’s actions are shaped

by the structure, it is the agency that decides which structures shape its choices: “Individuals, then, make choices within a complex set of *incentive structures*” (Most and Starr, 1989: 27, 29). Agency is important in its “ability to interpret and the power to choose among not only different behavioral options, but also among different interests, identities, decision-making procedures” (Friedman and Starr, 1997: 11). Hence, actor’s choices are the result of consideration and those parts of the structure are meaningful that are chosen by the agent. This study explores which exogenous factors affect right-wing parties’ choices on immigration and also examines the role that the agency in the change as it is the agency, who decides which factors are meaningful.

Having been extensively studied in international relations and foreign policy analysis (Carlsnaes, 1992; Joseph, 2008; O’Donnell, 1973; O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Wendt, 1987), the agency-structure dualism can also be applied to politics within state (Mahoney and Snyder, 1999) and to public policy (Castles, 1981), explaining policy choices of political parties. The goal of this study is not to advance the ontological discussion on the agency-structure problem, but to use it as a lens through which to explain the policy change of right-wing parties in power. In the context of explaining party policy change, the debate around structure and agency is about generating valid knowledge to answer the research question. Thus, in the given situation structural explanations provide a more complete insight into why parties change their positions and why change does occur, because parties do not form their policies in a vacuum, they build their policies based on events that happen around them. However, focusing on exogenous factors, the analysis of immigration policy change also accounts for the role of the agency in producing this change.

## **2.2 Theories of party policy change**

Political parties change their policies all the time and there are a variety of explanations as to why this is so. This chapter draws on both internal and external factors that influence parties’ positions, but gives preference to explaining the change through

exogenous factors, justifying why this is the case. Thus, in order to determine the correct contextual factors, one needs to address the theory that helps to specify those factors (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 1153). Research on party position and policy change can be divided into two categories: one tradition emphasises that change in party policy positions is caused by internal factors, while another tradition highlights the importance of external factors (Fagerholm, 2015: 2). This research gives preference to the external tradition and justifies why this is the case. However, it also briefly examines the standpoint, which emphasises the importance of internal factors and explains why this theory is not sufficient enough to explain changes in party's policies.

Party policy change can be explained by examining factors internal to the party that influence decision-making process within the party. Change in a party leader is one of the factors that lead political parties to alter their policies (Harmel et al., 1995; Harmel and Janda, 1994). Downs (1957: 111) also hypothesises that parties change their positions when a new leader takes over. However, evidence to support the hypothesis that changes in party leadership lead to the changes in parties' positions is scarce (Fargerholm, 2015: 503). Another factor that is claimed to have an impact on parties changing their policy positions is change in a dominant faction (Harmel et al., 1995; Harmel and Tan (2003).

The explanation of party policy change caused simply by internal factors is not sufficient because even if parties change their policies based on a change of leader or on a change in the dominant faction (Harmel and Janda, 1994), they still need factors external to party pressures that lead to the change in the policy to justify those changes. However, these explanations are not sufficient because parties are not immune to external pressures, which affect their decision-making and internal drivers are not able to explain everything (Partos and Bale, 2014: 604). Leaders need to justify the change in their policy positions based on the events that are happening within the country context or even within the broader context. If policy change would only depend on internal factors, then in

comparative perspective different parties will have the same policy outcomes. Since this is unlikely to be true there is a need to address external or contextual aspects that have an impact on party policy change. This is not to imply that the internal tradition is flawed, but to suggest it is insufficient to explain immigration policy change. Finally, this research tests exogenous factors that influence party position change to fill the gap in the literature as recent research on the Conservative Party (Bale and Partos, 2014; Partos, 2017) tested these internal factors and found that party leadership change influenced the development of immigration policies of the UK Conservative Party, while changes in the dominant faction were less significant. Therefore, this study argues that the internal tradition is not suitable in yielding sufficient explanations of party policy change and the examination of factors external to the party needs to be addressed.

### ***2.2.1 Exogenous factors***

The second tradition emphasises the importance of external factors for party policy change. The chapter proceeds with an examination of these external factors in detail, also giving special attention to their operationalisation. Alongside sketching out the range of external factors that might have an influence on parties' positions, this subsection also operationalises these factors into specific variables pertinent for this research. The factors that underpin the logic of the right-wing parties' change on immigration are not limited to those that are discussed in the theories on party policy change and some of the factors arise during data analysis. Existing theories of party policy change do not cover all the exogenous conditions that can impact the development of immigration policy in three country cases. While this subsection elaborates on the theorised exogenous factors, additional, agency-related factors that influence political parties' choices on immigration are explored in the case-specific chapters (four, five and six).

### ***Party competition***

There has been extensive research done on party competition as an element that shapes party positions depending on the behaviour of other parties on certain issues. Party competition is one of the most discussed variables and it certainly plays a role in

immigration debate, especially when it comes to the right of the ideological spectrum. Budge (1994) argues that party policy change happens because parties respond to the shift(s) of rival parties. Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009: 835-837) found strong evidence that parties do adjust their positions in the same direction and that the likelihood is higher if they belong to the same ideological spectrum. In this case shifts by a rival party represent party competition on the right. "The mere presence of anti-immigrant parties can push mainstream parties towards a tougher line on immigration for fear of being outflanked" (Sides and Citrin, 2007: 477). The classic theory of party competition (Downs, 1957) emphasises that electoral rise of some parties will force other parties to adopt an accommodative strategy in order to prevent voter defection and maximise their vote share. Laver (2005) demonstrates that parties alter their policy positions as a response to shifting affiliations of the voters, adapting to the political environment. When it comes to immigration, party competition is likely to affect mostly right-wing parties, however left-wing parties are not immune to voter alienation either (Goodwin and Ford, 2016). As Akkerman (2012: 55) pinpoints: "the pressure to coopt policy stances of the electoral competitor should be weighing on mainstream right [...] because the appeal of radical right parties is most tempting for voters on the right side of the political spectrum". Electoral rise of radical right "changes the structure of the political space, as well as influences other political actors" (Rydgren, 2003: 46), pressuring them to adopt an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards the radical right. The success of radical right creates pressure for other political parties to reinforce their positions on immigration (Abou-Chadi, 2016).

The salience of the issue puts pressure on political parties to respond to the concerns of the public, to stress the importance of the issue on their agenda and if need be to change their stance on the issue depending on the priority of the issue. Issue salience is something similar to the public opinion variable, but it is not the same thing. Political parties change their behaviour when the salience of the issue increases. When immigration gains salience mainstream parties either hold on to their positions or co-opt

the positions of the competitor (Bale et al., 2010). Issues like immigration, popularised by radical right parties, have entered mainstream politics and can no longer be disregarded by the other political parties. Thus, this study hypothesises that the rise of radical right parties, which increases the salience of immigration, lead right-wing parties in power to adopt a more restrictive immigration approach.

Party competition on the right is operationalised through the rise of radical right's parties' electoral fortunes, which creates subsequent threats for right-wing parties in power, belonging to the same ideological family and having ideological proximity. Immigration is one of the key issues that right-wing parties in power and radical right choose to emphasise in their discourse. Therefore, party competition is assessed by examining the behaviour of right-wing parties in power towards their radical right competitors. Hence, in the UK, it is determined by the threat from UKIP in the UK and in France it is determined by the successes of FN. Switzerland constitutes a special case, where there is no presence of the radical right competitor for the SVP. There is a discussion among scholars whether SVP is the radical or the right-wing parties in power, but this thesis does not delve into this debate and considers SVP to be a mainstream party in a sense that it has been the most popular party in the country since 2003. Since 1991 it had a steady and consistent increase (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015: 83) and 2003 federal election brought a tremendous success for the SVP who "emerged as the clear winner, becoming the largest party in parliament and increasing its representation in government" (Dardanelli, 2005: 123). Hence, party competition is not considered as a factor that influences SVP's positions on immigration because there is no radical right competitor in the Swiss political spectrum that would threaten the electoral fortunes of the SVP.

#### *Public opinion*

Probably the most developed theory of party policy change (Fagerholm, 2015) argues that parties change their policies as a response to the shifts in public opinion (McDonald and Budge, 2005; Stimson et al., 1995). Adams et al. (2004) found evidence that parties

alter their policy positions when public opinion shifts away from the party. Meyer (2013: 90) agrees with these findings and argues that: 'parties follow voter position shifts if these preferences move away from the party platforms [...] in contrast parties are not likely to respond to public opinion shifts that move towards the party's policy platform'. Furthermore, previous research has found that niche parties usually do not respond to change in public opinion, while mainstream parties do (Adams et al., 2006: 518-519; Adams et al., 2009). Ezrow et al. (2011) demonstrate that mainstream parties respond more to shifts in the attitudes of their supporters rather than shifts in opinion of the general public. Recognising that there is a two-way relationship between public opinion and policy, meaning that they both influence each other (Page and Shapiro, 1983: 188) and sometimes it is hard to trace whether it is public opinion that had an impact on policy development or vice versa, this study does not have a goal to find this out. The aim is to investigate whether mainstream political parties actually respond to the change in public attitudes on immigration, whether they consider shifts in public opinion while altering their immigration policy positions because in some cases policy does not change despite public opinion shift on it (Page and Shapiro, 1983: 189). Therefore, it is not necessary that parties always react to public attitudes. Hence, this research traces if public opinion shifts influence parties' choices on immigration.

This overview of the influence of public opinion on party positions is important, but it gives a general picture whether parties consider it as a variable when deciding to change their immigration stances. However, what is more captivating to explore is, what factors within public opinion drive the opposition to immigration, which particular anxieties of the public the parties consider when altering their immigration stances. Therefore, the following paragraph provides a more detailed theoretical overview of the major concerns that explain public hostility towards immigration, which will also be tested in the case study chapters – four, five and six to explore whether right-wing parties in power considered specific concerns of the population on immigration.

### *Economic and cultural anxieties over immigration*

Public attitudes on immigration have been known to be linked to economic anxieties of the population (Citrin et al., 1997, Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Dustmann and Preston, 2001; Harwood, 1986; Mayda, 2006) and to national identity concerns (Brader et al., 2008; Citrin et al., 1990; Luedtke, 2005; McDaniel et al., 2011; McLaren, 2001; Sides and Citrin, 2007). Economic and cultural factors are the most discussed elements of the public opposition to immigration (Malhorta et al., 2013: 391-392). Viewing immigration as a threat through the economic lens is primarily linked to the competition for jobs (Malhorta et al., 2013: 391-392). Cultural threat is another driver of public opposition to immigration, which needs to be considered as a factor that drives parties to change their policy stances to please the public. The goal of this research is not to explain how public opinion on immigration changed between 2002 and 2015, but to explore first, whether right-wing parties in power considered shifts in public opinion on immigration when altering their immigration positions. And, second, to investigate whether concerns over national identity or concerns over economic anxieties drove this change.

### *Global economic change*

Adams et al. (2009) posit that right-wing parties in power change their policy stances as a reaction to global economic change. Furthermore, Hibbs (1997), Garret (1998) and Pierson (2001) posit that political parties take into consideration domestic and international economic situation, which influences their positions. Economic variable and its impact on immigration debate is salient in a way that when a country faces economic hardship or economic repercussions, the origins of which are external to the country in question, immigration can become more restrictive because economic context of the country is not really conducive for increasing immigration flows. Global economic change can influence the nature of country's welfare system and lead to tightening of welfare benefits. In times of economic hardship immigration can acquire a negative connotation by having immigrants blamed for perceived economic problems and by portraying them as benefit scroungers. Haupt (2010) and Ward et al. (2011) find evidence that political parties do not ignore global economic change and indeed alter their policy platforms as



a response to economic globalisation. Because of the problems in operationalisation of 'economic globalisation' and its measurement, this research operationalises changes in global economy through Global financial crisis that unfolded in 2007-2008. In the period studied, changes in global economy are operationalised through the global financial crisis that unfolded in 2007-2008. The study investigates whether the crisis had any impact on the development of more restrictive immigration discourse and policies in three cases. However, it should be said that this research does not delve into the discussion of specific economic indicators that influence parties' positions on immigration, but explores whether global financial crisis led right-wing parties in power to change their immigration policy stances.

#### *The effects of EU integration*

Immigration policies are not determined only based on the internal to the country factors, they are also shaped depending on the broader context. As Geddes (2003: 4) pinpoints: "Analysis of immigration policies should be placed in the context of general changes that affect countries from within - welfare state and labour market changes, and from outside - commitments to European integration". Even though immigration policy largely remains a matter reserved to national governments, some of its aspects like the 'four freedoms', which include free movement of people, services, goods and capital are defined by international agreements, established by supranational bodies. For instance, supranational forms of regulation can be those exogenous factors that have an effect on certain aspects of European countries' immigration policies, however these forms of regulation influence immigration policies of countries in a different way because each government reacts to them in a way pertinent to local political and economic context.

Fagerholm (2015: 1) states that "parties are also affected by major changes in the social and economic landscape [...] The changing political, social and economic environment challenges the everyday life of political parties and forces them to adapt and change". The changing pace of immigration and erasing of certain boundaries between states certainly has had an impact on immigration discourse and policies across Western

Europe. Namely, these big-scale political changes concern widening of the EU that has happened in 2004 and in 2007. It is hypothesised that it had an impact on the development of the immigration discourse and policies of right-wing parties in power in three country cases. Even though this variable is not explicitly elaborated in the literature on party policy change, the literature states that large-scale changes in political environment affect parties' behaviour. Changes in political and socio-economic environment are operationalised through the effects of the EU integration. In this research EU integration is seen to have an impact through EU enlargements, 2004 and 2007, when a big chunk of Eastern Europe joined the EU, which increased EU population by 75 million new residents (Kvist, 2004: 301). The enlargements brought anxieties about the "competition in the labor markets and for welfare benefits" (Kahanec, Zaiceva and Zimmermann, 2009: 4). Most of the EU member states imposed transitional controls for periods up to seven years, which restricted citizens of newly accessed countries to access labour markets in the old EU countries (Kahanec, Zaiceva and Zimmermann, 2009: 4). Widening of the EU and increased intra-EU migration did not only bring more opportunities for EU citizens to find work in other member states, but it also brought anxieties about national identity and welfare.

As Delanty (2008: 677) pinpoints:

There is an emerging crisis of solidarity with Europeanisation and this is centrally about anxieties about peoplehood. With the emergence of a European political community that has diminished national sovereignty at a time when global forces are also undermining nation states, both Europe and migration became linked as sources of instability for many people. Anxieties about Europe and migration are linked with fears of a clash of civilisations and anxieties about crime and social securities.

As widening of the EU has brought different kind of concerns around national identity and economic and social security anxieties, this research explores what kind of anxieties appeared in three country cases, and to what extent some anxieties predominated over the other ones and what were the reasons for it. Furthermore, if the effects of the EU integration underpinned the logic of immigration policy change of the right-wing parties

in power, what accounts for the variance in approaches of three cases when it comes to the EU. It should be said that EU enlargements are not the only aspects of EU integration that might drive political parties to redefine their immigration stances and that new features of EU integration might come during data analysis. As it was already noticed, Switzerland, despite not being a member of either EU or European Economic Area (EEA), is being affected by some of the EU policies, including immigration in particular because it joined the agreement of free movement of people with the EU in an exchange of Switzerland's access to the single market (European Commission, 2016). And, as it will be shown in chapter five, politics of immigration in Switzerland is largely shaped around Switzerland's relationship with the EU.

In the discussion on the importance of external factors it is crucial to highlight that it is often a combination of factors that have an influence on certain processes rather than just a sole ingredient that causes the change. As Ragin (1987: 24) underlines: "Whenever social scientists examine large-scale change [...] they find that it is usually *combinations* of conditions that produce change". Furthermore, he argues that it is not simply the variety of conditions that produce the change, but the "intersection of appropriate preconditions - the right ingredients for change. In the absence of any of these essential ingredients, the phenomenon - or the change - does not emerge" (Ragin, 1987: 25). Therefore, the study examines not only which factors lead right-wing parties in power to change their positions on immigration, but also explores whether the interaction of particular factors was responsible for producing the change. Finally, it is crucial to highlight that this research does not limit itself to these independent variables, derived from the literature. Other causes of immigration policy change in three cases emerge through the analysis of interview data. Tracing endogenous factors not previously discussed in theories brings the contribution to the existing theories on party policy change.

Based on the theories of party policy change that focus on the exogenous factors, the following six hypotheses are produced and are tested with the elite interview data in case study chapters: chapters four, five and six.

**H1:** Party competition on the right, or more specifically, the presence of strong radical right competitor leads right-wing parties in power to adopt an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards their rivals and go hard line on immigration<sup>1</sup>.

**H2:** Right-wing parties in power pursued restrictive immigration stance as a response to shifts in public opinion on the issue, which became more negative over the years.

**H3:** Perceived identity concerns of the public about the threat from Islam and integration of Muslims resulted in the introduction of more restrictive policies in integration domain.

**H4:** Perceived economic anxieties of the public over immigration over unrestricted EU immigration were at the origins of the changing approach to immigration.

**H5:** 2007-2008 global financial crisis underpinned more restrictive approach of the three right-wing parties in power on immigration and led right-wing parties in power to reframe immigration through social welfare lens.

**H6:** The effects of the EU integration and widening of the EU community made the right-wing parties in power to pursue a more restrictive immigration stance.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noticed that in Swiss chapter the hypothesis about the impact of party competition is absent as in Swiss case, there was no credible competitor for the SVP that would be further to the right in the Swiss political spectrum.

### **2.3 Political Opportunity Structure Theory**

In recent years POS theory has become increasingly relevant in the study of party politics. Primarily the literature on party politics and POS focused on the populist radical right parties (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Koopmans et al., 2005; Mudde, 2007, Rydgren, 2005; Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Kestila and Soderlund, 2007). Thus, Rydgren (2005) elaborated on various POS that led to the emergence of the new party family, Mudde (2007: 232-256) examined what POS influence electoral fortunes of the radical right and how does it happen, pointing to institutional, cultural and political context. Kitschelt and McGann (1995) and Arzheimer and Carter (2006: 419-443) provided a refined analysis of POS that explain the variation in radical right parties' success, pointing to the crucial factors that affect radical right party support. If Arzheimer and Carter (2006) examined POS more broadly, Kestila and Soderlund (2007) presented a more refined discussion, focusing on the subnational POS that influenced the success of radical right in France. Finally, Koopman's et al. (2005: 188) research pointed to the specific opportunities that influence claims-making of the radical right parties. As can be seen, the POS, successfully applied to party politics literature, concentrated on a radical right party family, tracing POS that explained the rise and variation in success of these parties. Right-wing parties have not received the same attention. Therefore, this study differs from the previous research because it demonstrates how POS explain the variation in different responses to immigration issue by right-wing parties in power.

Despite having its origins and main application in the field of social movements, POS can also be applied to party politics because political parties like social movements are also collective actors. Lees (2008: 29) highlights that political opportunities can be taken both by social movements and by political parties. In this research POS theory helps to explain the degree of variation in parties' positions and policies through the examination of the political environment in which parties operate. Political parties change their policies, even if they change it in the same direction overall, there is still a degree of variation. Political opportunities were first used in Eisinger's (1973) work, which tried to

explain why some cities in America had major riots in 1960s (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004: 1459). McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (1996: 2001) are known as classic developers of the POS that is usually applied to explaining social movements. The aim of this subsection is not to demonstrate how this theory has been advanced by various social movement scholars, but to pinpoint what is understood by POS and how this can be applied for this study to explain the variation in right-wing parties' positions on immigration.

Political opportunity structures are defined as "consistent - but not necessarily formal or permanent - dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for the collective action" (Tarrow, 1994: 85). POS are used "to explain how the political context affects the differential development and influence of ostensibly similar movements" (Meyer, 2003: 17). The concept of opportunity implies that the answer to the question why the policies change is in part to do with the agency and in part to with the structure (context) in which the change is happening (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly, 1996: 24). The theory gives more explanatory power to structure as it stresses that "the concept of political opportunity emphasises resources *external* to the group" (Tarrow, 1998: 20). POS are external in a way that there are "outside constraints on the activities of social movements and interest groups" (Princen and Kerremans, 2008: 1131). These opportunities and constraints are external to the agency of political parties and they are the attributes of the environment in which political parties operate. POS are "dimensions of the environment" (Tarrow, 1994: 85) that explain actor's decision with the reference to the context in which actor operates.

As this theory deals with collective action, it can also be extrapolated to explain the behaviour or the policy choices of political parties on immigration because political parties are collective actors that have specific interests. Parties, like interest groups are presented with opportunity structures that shape their positions. The theory is applicable party politics research because "factors that give rise to social mobilization are also those that give rise to policy change" (Meyer and Minkoff, 2004: 1462). As Meyer and Minkoff

(2004: 1463) highlight: “understanding the relationship between context and action is critical to tackling larger theoretical question of the relationship between structure and agency”. Understanding the interaction between opportunity structures and political parties’ positions on immigration is key for explaining the logic behind immigration policy change of right-wing parties in power.

The fundamental dualism of ‘agency versus structure’ comes forward in the POS theory as well. This research does not perceive opportunity structures as stable and immune to change from the agency. On the contrary, it recognises that they “are dynamic in the sense that they may change in response to evolving societal sensitivities as well as the behaviour of interest groups” (Princen and Kerremans, 2008: 1134). Political parties, compared to interest groups or social movements, can even have a bigger impact on opportunity structures because they are the actors with decision-making powers. Thus, such opportunities as relationship with the EU do not only shape parties’ policy positions on immigration, but that political parties also influence how relationship between EU and member state is unfolding. Events like Brexit in the UK and the Initiative Against Mass Migration in Switzerland demonstrate how agency influences the structure. This research accepts that structure is not immune from the influence or actions of agency, but that “political actors identify and construct opportunity structures. Thus, opportunity structures are not merely imposed on political actors from the outside, but are (at least partly) the outcome of activities by those actors themselves” (Princen and Kerremans, 2008: 1143). Such perspective not only gives the explanatory power to the context, in which changes are happening, but also to the agency, which, to a certain extent is also responsible for creating the opportunities. Therefore, the study aims to bring contribution to the identification of those attributes of national POS that explain the variation in right-wing parties’ responses to immigration. Such understanding of opportunity structures recognises the relevance of rational choice theory, where the agency matters because although political opportunities are there, they only become relevant when they are perceived and taken or rejected by political parties. Opportunity structures are only

valuable if they are taken by political actors, in this case, by right-wing parties in power. And the relevant question here is which opportunities are taken by mainstream parties and which are not. The thesis explores this in chapter eight.

This research aims to bring specific contribution to the application of POS to the field of immigration and right-wing parties in power by highlighting the attributes of POS that facilitate or constrain right-wing parties' choices. As Koopmans et al. (2005: 188) successfully pinpointed: "social movement scholars have tended to specify political opportunity structures at a too general level, without taking into account the characteristics of particular issue fields and collective actors". Therefore, this study aims to address this criticism by pointing to the attributes of POS that are pertinent to the explanation of immigration policy positions of right-wing parties in power. Having explored theories of party policy change that explain why do parties change their policy positions and POS theory, which helps to explain the variation, the chapter proceeds with the discussion of the importance of causal mechanisms that are responsible for producing the change.

#### **2.4 Causal mechanisms**

This research does not only explore exogenous factors that underpin the logic of right-wing parties in power, it also explains in what way these causal factors translated into restrictive immigration policies by identifying the mechanisms. Mechanisms are crucial for unpacking the causal chain and painting the picture of how the change has occurred. Mechanisms are instrumental in explaining how the change has occurred as they "produce compelling causal explanations" (Faletti and Lynch, 2008: 333). For explaining certain outcomes, causal chain needs to be constructed and this can only be done with the exploration of causal mechanisms because independent and dependent variables are linked to each other through causal mechanism(s). Before proceeding with the discussion on mechanisms, there is a need to define what is meant by a mechanism in this study. It is important to highlight that there is no agreed definition of the mechanism



and that it can be understood as “a process, an outcome, or a factor” (Mayntz, 2004: 238-239). This research does not delve into discussion on various definitions of mechanisms, but it justifies what kind of understanding of mechanism is pertinent in this particular case. Thus, mechanism is not identified as a variable (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 1145), but as “*micro-level causal link* between macro-level variable A and macro-level variable B” (Bengtsson and Hertting, 2014: 710). Mechanism “refers to *recurrent processes* linking specified initial conditions and a specific outcome” (Mayntz, 2004: 241). Such understanding of a mechanism is dictated by the methods used to find the answer to the research question. Namely, because this study uses process tracing as a method to explore the causes and the mechanisms that account for immigration policy change, it understands a mechanism as a causal pathway (Gerring, 2008: 178; Bengtsson and Hertting, 2014: 4-5). Process tracing interprets mechanisms as a process, an action, because it is about figuring out “who knew what, when, and what they did in response” (Bennett, 2010: 209). As Mayntz (2004: 241) underlines: “mechanisms state *how*, by what intermediate steps, a certain outcome follows from a set of initial conditions”. Hence, this study follows the approach of understanding mechanisms as causal paths or processes that explain certain outcomes.

It should also be noted that this study follows the probabilistic understanding of a mechanism, which means that it does not always operate the same, but can work differently, depending on the context. While some (Mahoney, 2001: 580-581) postulate that “the mechanism is sufficient to produce the outcome of interest”, following a deterministic approach for understanding mechanisms, others (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 1144) argue that the relationship between causal mechanisms and context is important in explaining the change because “credible casual social scientific explanation can occur if and only if researchers are attentive to the interaction between causal mechanisms and the context in which they operate. Thus, Faletti and Lynch (2009) believe that context influences the operation of mechanism. Only probabilistic understanding of the nature of a mechanism is compatible with process tracing method (Beach and Pedersen, 2013).

As a mechanism constitutes the link between the context and the outcome, it helps to uncover the causal chain that explains how this change was produced. It is also important to note that “a mechanism-based explanation describes the causal process selectively. It does not aim at an exhaustive account of all details but seeks to capture the crucial elements of the process by abstracting away the irrelevant details” (Hedström and Ylikoski, 2010: 53). Thus, these causal processes are described in relative subsections in chapters four, five and six, which taken together form a casual mechanism.

When it comes to making causal inferences and generalising, Faletti and Lynch (2009: 1144) postulate that a probabilistic standpoint helps to make stronger causal inferences than a deterministic one, by stressing the importance of appropriately contextualising the mechanisms to avoid flawed causal inferences. Bengtsson and Herrting (2014: 6) agree with them, arguing that: “claiming determinacy in individual case *ex post* does not help us in generalising to other cases”. From probabilistic point of view, the operation of a mechanism cannot be pre-determined, meaning that we do not know how a mechanism will work in a given situation. Therefore, the findings of this research allow to generalise causal mechanisms, but the outcome that they produce is based on the context in which mechanisms operate. This study contributes to the identification of specific mechanisms that are associated with party policy change. Having discussed the ontological properties of a mechanism, the chapter proceeds with examination of some examples of causal mechanisms that are derived from the literature on causal mechanisms and that can be pertinent for explaining party policy change. As the end product of process tracing is the production of causal chain, which contains different causes and mechanisms that can only be discovered in the process of tracing, all possible causal mechanisms cannot be theorised beforehand, therefore, the chapter draws only onto framing. More causal mechanisms are unveiled in case study chapters: chapters four, five and six.

### *Framing*

The concept of 'frame' originates from the work of Goffman (1974) and was later developed by Snow and Benford (1992: 137), who define a frame as an "interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one's present or past environment". In other words, framing is the way political parties present their policy positions and how they frame immigration through the lens of external factors to justify their immigration policy choices. As Rydgren (2005: 426) pinpoints frames "function as modes of attribution and articulation. They attribute blame for perceived social problems by identifying individuals, social groups or structures that are believed to have caused the problem in question (diagnostic framing); they also suggest a general line of action (prognostic framing)". However, political parties do not adopt frames randomly, they are careful in selecting which to choose because they are seeking to adopt the frame that will resonate with a large number of voters in order to attract new voters and prevent the old electorate from alienating. Some prominent researchers (Kitschelt, 1995; Ignazi, 1996, Rydgren, 2003) posited that in the past the politicization of immigration played a role in decreasing the salience of frames connected to economic cleavages and contributed to the increased salience of sociocultural cleavages. This research argues that right-wing parties in power in three country cases did not increase the salience of one issue over another, rather they reframed the socio-cultural frame through the lens of the economic one. In a way immigration issue became surrounded by so-called 'welfare chauvinism', which boils down to the support for the welfare state, that is only available to nationals, denying access to foreigners (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990; Alesina and Glaeser, 2004; Crepaz and Reagan, 2009), advocating that "social policy should be directly linked with an ethnic and sovereign nation state" (Nordensvard and Ketola 2014: 16), meaning that access to social services should be based upon the nationality rather than just residency requirement. The thesis demonstrates that such framing of immigration through social welfare lens became popular with the right-wing parties because of the pressure from the radical right parties (Schumacher and van

Kersbergen, 2014: 2). Reframing of the welfare discourse in a nationalist way and changing nature of immigration policies present a danger for immigrants by creating further tension in a society, contributing to increasing xenophobia.

This chapter presented a theoretical framework of the thesis by examining theories of party policy change that focus on external factors that lead political parties to alter their policy positions. It highlighted that for answering posed research questions, structural explanations provide a more complete insight, although agency related explanations are not completely disregarded. The chapter also operationalised some of vague exogenous factors into more specific variables. It described how POS theory is suitable for explaining the degree of variation in the outcome in three cases. The chapter concluded with the examination of theories on causal mechanisms and their understanding in this research. The next chapter proceeds with methodological discussion, drawing on methods, different sources of data, data collection and data analysis techniques and ethical considerations. It is the last introductory chapter before the empirical discussion on cases starts.

## Chapter 3

### Methods

This chapter sets out the methodological framework that was selected to find the answers to the research question on why conservative parties change their immigration policies and what are the mechanisms responsible for that. First, it examines the case study approach as the most suitable one for this research, by highlighting its strengths. It points to the added value of the comparative case study design for providing explanations of why parties change their immigration policies. Second, the chapter proceeds by describing different types of data used in the research, the process of data collection in three countries and the data analysis technique. Third, it elaborates on ethical issues considered before data collection took place. Finally, the chapter finishes with an examination of process tracing as a method of within case analysis, arguing that it is the only possible method that allows for the exploration of causal mechanisms in three cases.

#### 3.1. Case-study method

The case study method is chosen as a methodology for this research as it gives the strongest test to the hypotheses as to why particular decisions have been taken by right-wing parties in power because it allows to investigate the question in the context, which is crucial in explaining the outcome. Furthermore, case studies are central to explaining decision-making processes, as they “illuminate a *decision* or sets of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (Schramm, 1971 cited in Yin, 2003: 12). Context, which is given a crucial examination in case study research is important in explaining why certain decisions are made (Hall, 2003). As this research explains the immigration policy change from a structuralist perspective, emphasising the role of external factors in producing the change, the case study method permits to examine the context in which political parties operate and the influence of that context on party’s immigration stance and decisions to change it. Following Yin (2003: 13), a

case study method is used when the researcher believes that contextual conditions are important in explaining the outcome. Furthermore, context is important for the establishment of the causal chain, which explains how a specific outcome occurred: “case study research usually relies heavily on the contextual evidence and deductive logic to reconstruct causality within a single case” (Gerring, 2007: 172). Context is operationalised through factors exogenous to a party that are derived from theories on party policy change, which were previously described in chapter two.

As this research explains the logic of the decision-making of the right-wing parties in power on immigration, case study method is crucial for pointing to motivations that actors have, motivations that explain why do political parties change their minds.

Case studies are superior to large-N studies in helping the researcher to understand the perceptions and motivations of important actors and to trace the process by which these cognitive factors form and change. (Blatter and Haverland, 2012: 6)

One of the goals of the research is to uncover those causal factors that lead to the change in immigration rhetoric and to the subsequent policy change of the conservative parties. Case study research design has an advantage as “one of the most visible and important contributions of case study methods has been to identify casual variables left out earlier in analysis” (George and Bennett, 2004: 254). Case study is also particularly useful for unveiling causal mechanisms through which causal factors have an influence on the outcomes because it allows researchers to “examine the operation of causal mechanism in individual cases in detail” (George and Bennet, 2004: 21).

Case study requires the researcher “to collect information from multiple sources, but aimed at corroborating the same fact or phenomenon” (Yin, 2003: 99). It “relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needed to converge in a triangulating fashion” (Yin, 2003: 14). Interview data are triangulated to check for corroboration of the evidence. Party manifestos, policy papers and other documents related to immigration policy change are used to triangulate the information obtained from the interviews.

The case study approach helps to establish the causes of certain phenomenon and aims to detect: “*whether* and *how* a variable mattered to the outcome, rather than at assessing *how much* it mattered” (George and Bennett, 2004: 25). In other words, the purpose of the research is to explore the factors that trigger the change and the mechanisms that account for it (George and Bennet, 2004: 31), rather than to examine whether one factor was more important than the other. Even though it is not the purpose of this section to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach and large-N studies, it is necessary to pinpoint how a case study approach is a more suitable method for finding the answer to the proposed research questions. Unlike statistical methods, case studies cannot determine the strength of one factor over another, but its advantage is that it is able to trace causal mechanisms, while statistical methods are not able to do that. They can only help to find the causes of certain processes, while the investigation of causal mechanisms is only possible with the case study research (Gerring, 2007: 44-45). Here the question of causality and the intersection of variables comes into play. It is argued in this thesis that immigration policy-making is not a result of linear causation, it is a result of what Ragin (1987: 23) calls ‘multiple conjunctural causation’, which means that the changes occur because of a combination of different factors. Thus, in chapter five it will be demonstrated that immigration policy change would not have occurred simply because one factor - the Eurozone crisis, but rather the combination of the Eurozone crisis with the free movement of people led to the launch of the Initiative Against Mass Migration by the SVP. The analysis of data demonstrates that immigration policy change in three cases is not always a result of linear causation, meaning that one factor or another is responsible for the change, but that the outcome is a result of the interaction of certain factors. Having stressed the importance of the case study method for explaining how exogenous factors lead to the change in immigration stances of the conservative parties, it is equally important how the change occurs, specifically, what causal mechanisms are responsible for the change.

The aim of this research is not simply to produce three different explanations on why right-wing parties in power changed their immigration policies, but to provide certain grounds for generalisation that can be applicable to the population of cases. By comparing the findings across three cases, the research points to the variation in right-wing parties' responses. Explaining this variation is in a nutshell a point of comparison (Ragin, 1987: 2) as by pointing out the explanation of why the variation occurs, we are able to provide causal inferences to other cases that share similar traits. While within-case inferences on why the immigration policy change occurred in the UK, Switzerland and France are important for scholars who study these countries, the aim is to suggest grounds for generalisations that are important for scholars who study party policy change and immigration policy change in general.

### **3.2. Data**

This section examines the data that have been used in this research, more specifically the data that describe the process of immigration policy change in three cases and the data that have been used to find the answer to the proposed research questions. Furthermore, it describes data collection process and data analysis technique. It explains how different codes were constructed and the coding process that elite interview data underwent.

The data used in this research is both existing and newly collected. Existing data are the data accessible in public domain, which consists of electoral manifestos of the three right-wing parties and these countries' immigration legislation and policies. The change in SVP's position on immigration is evidenced by examining 2007, 2011 and 2015 federal elections manifestos, immigration initiatives launched by the SVP or by its national councillors, immigration laws and referendums. The evolution of the UK Conservative Party immigration stance is demonstrated with the reference to 2005, 2010, 2015 general election manifestos and by examination of immigration policies under 2010-2015 Coalition government. Finally, French immigration policy change is explored through



Sarkozy's immigration laws, when he was the minister for the Interior, his 2007 and 2012 presidential programmes, integration legislation on headscarves and laws that were adopted under his presidency between 2007 and 2012. This constitutes the descriptive data, which demonstrates how immigration policy has changed in three cases and is a first step towards the explanation of policy change. As they do not explain the change, more data were generated to provide an explanation for the change. Thus, semi-structured elite interviews were conducted in three countries to explain why did parties change their policies on immigration. The following subsection focuses on the process of data collection as elite interviews were crucial type of data that had an explanatory power to provide the answer to the research question on what drives the parties to change their policies. While, the decision to select existing data that allows to describe position and policy change is in partly self-explanatory, the clarification of elite interview data collection needs to be addressed as this type of data were the key to opening the black box of immigration policy-making.

### ***3.2.1 Data collection***

The choice of semi-structured elite interviews was made as this is the only way to understand the logic underpinning immigration policy change. Elite interviews allow us to establish the underlying causes of certain processes and allow to "interview first hand participants of the process they are investigating and obtain accounts from the direct witness to the events in question" (Tansey, 2007: 767). Furthermore, elite interviews help to uncover the real explanation(s) of certain choices because they allow "interviewers to probe their subjects, thus moving beyond written accounts that may often only represent an official version of events to gather information about the underlying context and build up to the actions that took place" (Tansey, 2007: 767). "[E]lite interviews offer political scientists a rich, cost-effective vehicle for generating unique data to investigate the complexities of policy and politics" (Beamer, 2002: 86). This research defined elites as those, who have decision-making authority and exert an influence on immigration policy-

making. Semi-structured interviews are preferable to structured ones as they allow the researcher to focus on a particular topic, address specific issues and to increase cross-case comparability of the research (Bryman, 2008: 439-440).

Overall, thirty-six semi-structured elite interviews were conducted in the UK, Switzerland and France between October 2015 and July 2016. More precisely, twelve interviews were conducted in the UK, eighteen in Switzerland and six in France. As the main goal of the research was to understand and explain the logic underpinning conservative parties' decision-making process on immigration, the interviewees were chosen by targeted sampling. I targeted those elites, who belonged to the conservative parties and those, who were part either part of the immigration policy-making process, like members of the Coalition government, civil servants or special advisors, and those, who exerted certain influence on political elites or on immigration decision-making, namely, interest groups. Interviewees were contacted mostly by email, sometimes via the phone and in person during party events. While understanding that targeted sampling can cause a selection bias (King et al., 1994), it is the best strategy to explain the logic of the right-wing parties' positions on immigration, as "certain categories of individuals may have a unique, different or important perspective on the phenomenon in question and their presence in the sample should be ensured" (Robinson, 2014: 32). Snowballing technique was employed at a later stage to increase the number of interviews. In Switzerland selection yielded good results, while in the UK and in France the response rate was lower, which was an obstacle to generalising data and had a potential to introduce "significant systemic error" (Goldstein, 2002: 669). This problem was to a certain extent offset by concentrating on the "degree to which non-respondents are likely to differ from those sampling units who are successfully contacted and interviewed" (Goldstein, 2002: 670). Thus, many non-respondents and refusals belonged to the same cohort of successfully targeted interviewees. Across three cases interviews were conducted with conservative politicians, civil servants, ministers, members of the Coalition government,

special advisors, high rank officials, and pressure group representatives. All interviews were recorded and supplemented by the notes taken during the interview.

First tranche of the interviews (twelve) was conducted in the UK between October 2015 and February 2016. Interviewees included civil servants from the Home Office, Conservative Party MPs and members of the Cabinet, former secretary of state for Business, Innovation and Skills (Vince Cable), former special advisor to the Conservative minister, chair of the Migration Advisory Committee (Sir David Metcalf), pressure groups: Universities UK (UUK) and the Migration Watch UK (MWUK). In the UK, the majority of the interviewees were worried about exposing their identity. Anonymity was requested in nine instances and only three interviewees allowed to go public with their names. The response rate was quite low, with approximately one third of those, who were contacted, replying to the request. Most of those, who replied, agreed for an interview, while some refused because of the lack of time or because of the policy not to give interviews to the academic researchers. Some of the interviews were obtained through snowballing technique. Most of the interviews were conducted face to face in London and in Manchester, during the 2015 Conservative Party conference and two interviews were conducted over the phone. The average length for the UK interview ranged from forty to forty-five minutes to an hour.

Second tranche of the interviews (eighteen) was conducted in Switzerland between March and April 2016, which was financially supported by an external grant from University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES). The majority of interviews were established before the travel to Switzerland, however three interviews were arranged while in Switzerland thanks to snowballing technique. In total eighteen interview interviews in Switzerland with the SVP national councillors (MPs), people, working in party secretariats, civil servants from the State Secretariat for Migration, and one academic took place. Interviewees in Switzerland were very forthcoming and more than a half of those who were contacted, agreed to contribute to the research.

Furthermore, all of them were fine with remaining public and were not worried about their anonymity. Interviews were conducted in two languages: French and English. Interviewees from French speaking part preferred French, while almost all of those from German speaking part preferred English. Interviews were longer compared to the British and French ones, with the average length varying between an hour and hour and a half. Couple of interviews lasted as long as two hours.

The final tranche of interviews (six) was conducted during a two-week trip to Paris in June-July 2016. The cohort of interviewees included two MPs from the Republicans (Les Républicains), one of whom is a current French prime minister, the director of Jacques Chirac's presidential campaigns, civil servants from the Ministry of The Interior and later the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development. The response rate was extremely low, which can partially be explained with the upcoming primaries that The Republicans (former UMP) at that time. The number of interviews may seem small, yet the discussions with other English-speaking academics, researching France, confirmed that, being an outsider and trying to get access to French politicians and French senior civil servants is extremely hard, even if the researcher speaks fluent French. Originally six contacts were established before coming to Paris, two of the interviews were then established via snowballing technique, however they cancelled at the same day of the interview. Even though the number is smaller than in Swiss or British case, most of the interviews were conducted with the people directly involved and responsible for immigration policy making under Sarkozy's term as a president, which offsets the quantity of the interviews. All interviews were conducted face to face, in French and only two of the interviewees requested anonymity. The average length for the French interview varied from forty to fifty minutes. All the interviews are broken down in the table below.

The fieldwork in the UK, Switzerland and France allowed me to gather necessary data by conducting the interviews for testing the hypotheses regarding the factors that lead to

the immigration policy change in those countries. Overall, the fieldwork in Switzerland and the UK has been successful in terms of getting in touch with the interviewees, while in France, the success was hindered by the low response rate. I briefly present some observations from conducting fieldwork in three countries, which might be useful for researchers working on similar topics in these three countries. Sketching out the peculiarities of political cultures in three cases can provide an insight into overcoming obstacles in getting access to elites and conducting interviews in different languages. In the UK, the low response rate was offset by the direct recruitment of the interviewees in person, during the Conservative Party conference in Manchester and by networking. UK Conservative Party conference was a useful tool in getting access to politicians, with some of the interviews established during the conference. Connections and knowing the right people also worked well in the UK case because it yielded interviews with the people, who were crucial in providing information about Conservative Party's approach to immigration. In Switzerland, there was no problem with a low response rate as Swiss politicians were very forthcoming and a majority of them agreed for an interview. Some interviews were also established through snowballing technique, which also proved useful and successful. The language could be a definitive barrier to speaking to Swiss politicians from the French part, as most of them would not speak English or German, therefore there is a need to be fluent in French. The situation was better with the politicians from the German speaking part, as most of them would speak English or French. One could suggest that the forthcoming character of Swiss politicians has something to do with direct democracy and openness of Swiss politicians to the people. Finally, the success of getting a high number of interviews in France was hindered partly because the Republicans were in the middle of primaries for the 2017 presidential election and were not particularly interested in giving interviews to academic researchers. However targeted sampling successfully worked with French senior civil servants, while it failed with French politicians. Overall, getting interviews in France presented a bigger challenge than in the UK or Switzerland, even with researcher's fluency in French.

Table 1: Location and profession of interviewees					
Category	Conservative Politicians	Civil Servants	Coalition Members	Pressure Group Representatives	Academics
UK	4	4	1	3	-
Switzerland	14	3	-	-	1
France	2	4	-	-	-

### **3.2.2 Ethical considerations**

Before conducting the fieldwork, I ensured that my interviewees understood the purpose of the research, that their privacy is respected and that their participation in the interviews would not harm their careers. During first email contact, the interviewees were supplied with the participant information sheet (See Appendix A), which described the purpose of the research, why they were selected and what was expected from them if they agree for an interview. Before starting the interview, the interviewee was asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix B), which indicated that their anonymity will be assured. However, in some cases, when an interviewee did not object for their name to be revealed, a note was made on the consent form that an interviewee agreed to wave the anonymity. All emails, interviews and transcriptions are stored in the password-secured computer. In terms of harm to participant, it is unlikely that the questions that were asked during the interview had a sensitive impact on interviewees as it directly related to their work. Information coming from a politician or policy-maker could be damaging for his or her careers, as might any public expression of views that deviate from the official party line. At the start of each interview, interviewees were told that they can withdraw from an interview without any reason and that they do not need to provide a reason if they wish to do so with all the data collected up to the point destroyed and not used in the research.

### **3.2.3 Data analysis**

This research uses thematic approach to analysing semi-structured elite interviews, which requires data coding. Coding helps to analyse big chunks of data and “attributes interpreted meaning to each individual datum for later purposes of pattern detection, categorization, theory building, and other analytic processes” (Saldaña, 2013: 4). Coding is a useful tool for data analysis because it “enables researchers quickly to retrieve and collect together all the text and other data that they have associated with some thematic

idea” (Gibbs, 2014: 283). Interview data were analysed in two stages, using Saldaña (2013) coding approach, with the first stage being descriptive and the second one – analytical. First cycle was the initial coding of data, that enabled the organization of data into specific themes, while the second cycle of coding allowed to develop categories, patterns from the first cycle (Saldaña, 2013: 14, 207).

Descriptive coding method was used as a first coding cycle in order “to build a foundation for future coding cycles” Saldaña (2009: 66). Initially, bits of interview data, usually, passages, were attributed a specific theme (Saldaña, 2013: 88; DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011: 137), which constituted first cycle codes that were “identifications of the topic, not abbreviation of the content” (Tesch, 1990: 119). Therefore, the code was attributed not based on the content of the passage, but based on the specific theme, which means that one code was attributed to the content of a particular topic that was expressed in different ways. Thus, the first cycle codes were the independent variables, or, in other words, exogenous factors specified in theoretical framework that influence parties’ policies. Shifts in public opinion, party competition on the right (where applicable), perceived economic and perceived identity concerns, global financial crisis and the effects of the EU integration were first level codes that allowed to evidence the change in parties’ immigration policies. Also, some of the codes were data driven. While in Switzerland and in France there were no data-driven codes, in the UK there were two: the Home Office’s ideological dogmatism and influence of interest groups. While theories on party policy change did not account for these variables, the analysis of the interview data demonstrated that some of the responses did not fall within any theory-driven codes, but was an important factor that led the UK Conservative Party to change its immigration policy. Quotes with similar themes were put together, which eventually led to the creation of two new codes. Finally, the first level of coding also searched for the codes that described the mechanisms that accounted for immigration position and policy change. In each of the country cases there was only one theory-driven code: framing and during the first cycle of coding I searched for the ways political parties described immigration

and the ways they proposed to deal with the issue. Those passages from the interviews were taken and attributed to the framing mechanism code. However, as the theory did not specify other mechanisms that account for the policy change, other mechanism codes were data-driven. In each of the cases, the analysis of elite interviews identified one more mechanism that was responsible for immigration policy change.

This descriptive coding is an essential step for a second cycle coding, which deals with the interpretation and analysis (Saldaña, 2013: 89, Wolcott, 1994: 55). Among different second-level coding techniques, this research adopted pattern coding for the second cycle as it “is appropriate for the search of rules, causes and explanations in the data” (Saldaña, 2009: 152). Through the first cycle of coding evidence of immigration position and policy change was generated, while the second cycle of coding helped to explain the causes and mechanisms that led to the immigration policy change of conservative parties. Thus, second cycle of coding led to the creation of more sub-codes, which explained more specifically how certain factors led to the immigration policy change. For instance, one of the first cycle codes, the effects of the EU integration, was broken down into further codes (code-tree): the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and national laws and the effects of the free movement of people or anxieties about EU external border. This second level coding allowed to search for explanations why and how this particular variable was responsible for influencing right-wing parties’ positions on immigration.

Coding is an indispensable tool not only for theory testing, but also for theory development (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011: 138). It is important to note that codes were generated differently: some of the codes were developed from the theory (Boyatzis, 1998: 33), while other codes were data-driven, meaning that they were not specified by the theory, but emerged from the data. A deductive approach was taken to build the codes, however, after careful examination of data, it was discovered that theory-driven



codes did not account for all possible explanations of immigration position change, therefore some of the codes were built inductively, from raw data. Data-driven codes are crucial for enriching theories, in this research - the explanations why do parties change their policies, and their construction requires constant re-examination of the raw data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011: 138). In this research data-driven codes were used to complement the existing theories of party policy change by enabling to find additional causes that influence party's position(s) on immigration policy. NVivo software was used to analyse the interview data and develop first and second cycle codes. The codebook to the UK case is attached in the Appendix 4 of the thesis, which demonstrates the variety of codes and under which criteria specific passages of the elite interview data were attributed to the first-level codes. The UK case codebook serves as example, while first-level coding was similar in the other two cases, as it was mostly based on theoretical scholarship on party policy change.

### **3.3 Process tracing**

Two reasons underpinned the selection of process tracing as a method of within-case analysis. First, process tracing views context as crucial in explaining the outcome and, second, it permits to explore causal mechanisms that account for policy change. As this research is not interested in measuring causal effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable, meaning how the dependent variable (immigration policy change) will shift if the value of the independent variable(s) changes, process tracing is particularly useful because it concentrates on tracing what has caused a certain outcome and how. The aim of process tracing is to uncover is to identify the causal chain and causal mechanism (George and Bennett, 2004: 206). Process tracing is chosen as one of the three within-case methods (Blatter and Haverland, 2012: 1) because it allows to unveil causal mechanisms (Beach and Pedersen, 2013; Beach and Pedersen, 2016,

which are central to the process of change and 'is a key technique for capturing causal mechanisms in action (Bennet and Checkel, 2015: 9). Mechanisms uncover how exactly causal factors influenced the outcome: how something has changed. The essence of process tracing is 'the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing theories about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case (Bennett and Checkel, 2015: 7). As this research does not only explain what caused right-wing parties in power to change their immigration stances between 2002 and 2015, but also to address the question of how it happened, process tracing is the best within-case method because it searches for evidence about causal mechanisms in temporal sequence (Blatter and Blume, 2008: 33). The goal is to document and explain the mechanisms through which conservative parties in the UK, Switzerland and France have adopted more restrictive immigration positions, which subsequently led to immigration policy change. The aim is to explain how these causes lead to specific outcomes because causes *per se* are not sufficient; there needs to be a mechanism through which the causal energy is transmitted (Goertz and Mahoney, 2012: 102). Causal mechanisms are defined as "ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific context or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities" (George and Bennett, 2004: 137). Following the logic of George and Bennet (2004: 21), who note that "mechanisms operate only under certain conditions", this research traces the conditions necessary for activation of a mechanism. Without getting into too much unnecessary detail about the nature of causal mechanisms, it should be said that this research views causal mechanisms from the "probabilistic understanding of causality" (Trampusch and Palier, 2016: 442; Bennett and Checkel, 2015: 10-11). It means that the outcome of the mechanism "cannot be determined a priori by knowing the type of the mechanism that is at work" (Falletti and Lynch, 2009: 1147). Therefore, one mechanism would not necessarily lead to the same outcome in two cases, because the operation of the mechanism is dependent on the

context. This makes mechanisms generalisable across cases, but the importance of the contextual condition cannot be disregarded in explaining the outcome.

Process tracing is chosen as a within-case study methods as it “is an indispensable tool for causal inference” (Rohfling, 2012: 167). By linking causes of a process to its outcome, causal inferences are created. The construction of a causal chain is important in evidencing and explaining how the outcome has occurred as process tracing has causal and explanatory leverage only when causal chain is constructed (Waldner, 2015: 128). Evidence of every step in the hypothesised causal chain needs to be found and thick description is crucial here because the failure to describe each step in the causal chain leads to the failure in the overall analysis (Collier, 2011: 823) and to the lack of “completeness standard” (Waldner, 2015: 128). As mechanisms operate through individuals or actors (Beach and Pedersen, 2013), the specification of actors is needed to explain the activity that lies in the heart of the mechanism. Contextualising the data is crucial in process tracing: “we must be able to characterize key steps in the process, which in turn permits good analysis of change and sequence” (Collier, 2011: 824). The goal of process tracing is to derive causal process observations (CPOs) at the most micro-level possible, at the level of individual actors or groups, in this case – at the level of individuals: Conservative MPs, civil servants, members of the Coalition government, pressure groups).

As process tracing is about finding the “information about perceptions and motivations of actors” (Blatter and Blume, 2008: 32), one should consider their interests, power and resources is needed (González-Ocantos, 2016). In the process of assessing the data (semi-structured elite interviews), four things are evaluated in tracing the logic of immigration position change: interests of the actors, context in which they operate, bias (how likely that the same things would be obtained from different types of sources) and saturation (how much more inferential leverage is received from this extra piece given the number and types of sources already consulted) (González-Ocantos, 2016). In order

to establish descriptive and causal inference, diagnostic evidence needs to be found (Collier, 2011: 824). Evidence that is highly associated with a given hypothesis is crucial for establishing causal leverage. This research looks for the evidence underpinning the logic of immigration position change in semi-structured elite interviews, “uncovering the stimuli of decision-making” (Trampusch and Palier, 2016: 438). Using process tracing, this research explains the logic of conservative parties with regard to their positions on immigration.

Because process tracing allows to draw inferences from within-case analysis, the findings are generalised in a way, which Bennett and George (2004) call “contingent generalization”.

The findings from process tracing are not used to draw conclusions for a population of cases but for a set of potential causal configurations [...] The function of case studies here is mainly to show exactly whether and how a specific configuration of causal factors [...] or whether and how a specific mechanism leads to a specific outcome. Additional case studies would not strive to prove that this causal configuration also works within other cases, but they would try to find out whether other combinations of causal factors can also lead to the same or similar outcome. (Blatter and Blume, 2008: 29).

The findings of this research are not generalisable to other cases, where right-wing parties in power changed their immigration stances in a more restrictive direction, but they could be extrapolated to the cases, where similar causal configuration(s) produce the same outcome in other cases. Hence, the focus of contingent generalisation is on the combination of the operation of exogenous factors in different cases rather than on demonstration that these factors lead to a similar outcome in other cases, where parties adopted more restrictive immigration stance.

As process tracing is only able to produce within-case inferences, establishing a causal chain in a particular case, it is unable to yield cross-case inferences, which are important for generalisation of the findings. These limitations of process tracing with regard to generalisation of causes and mechanisms of immigration policy change can be overcome by comparison. Comparison gives ground to make certain suggestions about

generalisations. Unlike statistical research, which enables to make claims about generalisation of findings to other cases, qualitative research gives grounds to suppose that findings can be generalised, comparing them and examining the contexts in which the outcomes occur. The generalisation of mechanisms is possible across cases, but the importance of the context should be highlighted as the same mechanism is capable of producing different outcomes, depending on the context in which it operates (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 1161). This research aims to add to the existing theories on party policy change as process tracing is an indispensable tool for theory building. As highlighted by George and Bennett (2004: 217): “process tracing of cases relevant to the theory can identify causal processes not yet identified by the theory”. Apart from testing existing theories of party policy change, this research uncovers those causal factors and unveils those causal mechanisms that have not been theorised previously.

## Chapter 4

### **From detoxification strategy back to 'nasty party': explaining the Conservative's turn on immigration between 2005 and 2015**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Since 2005, the Conservative Party has performed a complete U-turn in its immigration policy. When David Cameron became leader of the Conservative Party in 2005, he came in on a platform of 'detoxification', pledging to change the image of the Conservatives as the 'nasty' party (Partos and Bale, 2015: 2). Cameron's new approach aimed to expand the electoral bases of the Conservative Party to include liberal voters (Gruber and Bale, 2014: 242). In 2007, after two years of silence on immigration, Cameron, during the Conservative Party conference gave a speech on 'population pressure', voicing concerns over immigration (BBC, 2007), indicating that immigration was becoming a salient issue for the party, which coincided with the effects of 2004 EU enlargement, when the British labour market was opened to residents of the new members states. As soon as the Conservatives returned to government in 2010 and formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, UK immigration policy underwent a major transformation, toward tighter restrictions, despite the Liberal Democrats' more pro-immigration position. This chapter explains this stark change in policy and rhetoric despite the party's original pledge to detoxify its 'nasty' image and to identify the mechanisms that accounted for the change.

Between 2002 and 2015 immigration has become a salient issue that has received the attention of parties on both ends of ideological spectrum, and both mainstream and niche parties. The nature of the debate around immigration has changed a great deal, partly due to the electoral rise of radical right parties, which have played a major role in politicising immigration (Schierup et al., 2006: 97). Yet radical right parties were not the only ones who increased the salience of immigration as a policy issue. As Mudde (2012: 12) pinpoints, right-wing parties in power have greater prominence as they are often responsible for immigration policy-making. Therefore, it is crucial to shift the attention to

right-wing parties because of their policy importance (Bale 2008: 317). The aim of this chapter is to explain the changing immigration stance of the Conservative Party both in opposition and under the Coalition government.

This chapter sheds the light on the drivers of the Conservatives' shift on immigration and on the mechanisms that have accounted for this policy change. It explains how UK immigration policy has become numbers driven and restrictive by addressing the role of the Conservative Party in immigration policy-making under the Coalition government, but also briefly examines the change in Conservative's stance on immigration preceding the Coalition. The immigration rhetoric captured in this research is further reflected in the Brexit debate that has followed. The timeframe of this research does not include Brexit, but the examination of the Conservative's Party changing stance on immigration is useful for understanding the Brexit debate, where immigration has been a defining theme. The chapter tests theories of party policy change, discussed in chapter two of this thesis, by examining whether these factors influenced the Conservative's immigration policy stance between 2005 and 2015. It also operationalises other crucial changes in the social, political and economic environment (Fagerholm, 2015: 1), not elaborated by these theories, but that have affected the evolution of the British immigration policy. By recognising the importance of structural factors in explaining party position change, the chapter does not disregard the role of the agency, as the agency of political parties is crucial in choosing which factors to take into account in its decision-making process. Furthermore, it is demonstrated that in case of the UK immigration policy, certain agentic factors were paramount in producing the change.

#### **4.1.1 Argument**

The argument put forth is stemming from hypotheses set in chapter two is that the Conservative's rhetoric on immigration during opposition and the subsequent immigration policy change under the Coalition government became restrictive and number driven as a response to a number of factors: increasingly negative public attitudes toward the issue, UKIP's electoral rise, the effects of EU integration, perceived

economic and identity anxieties of the public about migration. Furthermore, the immigration stance of the Conservative Party toughened as a consequence of their policy of austerity which allowed the party to frame immigration through a social welfare lens. These hypotheses are tested with the elite interview data.

#### ***4.1.2 Plan of the Chapter***

The chapter is laid out as follows. The second section gives a brief review on the evolution of the UK immigration policy since the Second World War and illustrates the change in Conservative's discourse on immigration by examining 2005, 2010 and 2015 party manifestos and explores immigration policy change under the Coalition government. It proceeds with analysis of the logic of change by shedding the light on the causal factors that led the Conservatives to change their immigration stance. Section four proceeds with analysis of the logic of the change, namely the discussion of causal factors that led the Conservatives to change their approach on immigration. The fifth section explains how this change has occurred, by elucidating the mechanisms that accounted for the change. The final section synthesises the core findings on causes and mechanisms and presents the complete account of the causal chain, which uncovers the logic of the Conservative's transformation on immigration and subsequent UK immigration policy change. The chapter concludes with the importance of structural explanations for influencing the party's decision-making, while accounting for the significance of agency in activating the mechanisms responsible for the change.

#### **4.2 Context**

British immigration policy has undergone major transformations since the end of the Second World War. In the aftermath of the War, Britain needed foreign labour to meet the demands of the economy and citizens of the British colonies had unrestricted rights to move and live in the UK until 1962 (Hansen, 2014: 201). However, this liberalised regime ended in 1962, when the British government introduced a work permit system for the Commonwealth citizens, which lasted until 1971 (Hansen, 2014: 201). The economic crisis of the 1970s shifted the Conservative (the Thatcher and Major) governments'



approach towards a more restrictive immigration policy and towards the integration of immigrants that were already in the UK (Ford et al., 2015: 1402). During Thatcher's era, immigration was under tight control, which was evidenced by the number of work permits granted between 1973 and 1989: the number of permits issued per year varied between 10,000 and 20,000 (Wright, 2010: 49). However, with the arrival of Labour government there has been a change towards a more open immigration policy: "Labour has introduced a number of measures to facilitate the entry of migrant workers, particularly from 2001, that have comprehensively changed policy and marked a decisive break with the previous model" (Somerville, 2007: 29).

The major shift in British immigration policy happened during the thirteen years of the New Labour government. However, the changes did not take place during Blair's first term, with the changes taking place mostly during the second, between 2001 and 2005 (Cordenstine and Hamshire, 2014: 275, 278). Blair's government encouraged economic immigration, including both skilled and unskilled.

Under Labour [...] Britain's economic immigration policy was transformed from a system underpinned by restriction to one of the most expansive in Europe: work permit criteria were relaxed, schemes such as the Working Holidaymakers programme and the Seasonal Agricultural Working Scheme (SAWS) were expanded, new highly skilled migrant worker schemes were launched and 2005 saw the introduction of a new points-based systems (PBS) modelled on the settler societies of Australia and Canada (Cordenstine, 2015: 1434)

The relaxation of immigration policies under the Labour government also included the decision not to impose transnational controls on the new EU member states during the 2004 Eastern enlargement (Geddes, 2014) because of the predictions that immigration from these countries would be at the level between 5, 000 to 13, 000 a year (Cordenstine, 2017: 180, Dustmann et al., 2005). Labour's liberal immigration stance led to the increase in public concern over immigration and led to the alienation of Labour voters during 2010 general election (Carey and Gedes, 2010; Cordenstine, 2015: 1433; Bale 2014). Now the chapter proceeds with the presentation of the Conservative Party position on immigration since 2005, when David Cameron became leader of the party

and indicated a fresh approach to immigration. Then, it pinpoints the changing nature of the Conservatives' immigration stance before the 2010 general election and during the Coalition government.

#### **4.3 Conservatives' immigration stance in opposition and under the Coalition government**

Before proceeding with the explanation of the causes and mechanisms that accounted for the immigration position and policy change of the Conservative Party, it needs to be demonstrated how it has changed and what are the peculiarities of the UK context, when it comes to immigration and the Conservative Party. Therefore, this section has two goals. The first goal is to discuss the context of the UK immigration debate with a particular emphasis on the Conservative Party. The second aim is to evidence how the Conservative's Party approach has evolved from avoiding immigration as a core issue up to 2007 to increasingly restrictive approach on immigration under the Coalition government, including changes to family, labour and student migration. It examines Conservative Party manifestos and shows which transformations UK immigration policy underwent under the Coalition government. The Conservative's position on immigration while in the opposition (2005-2010) was defined by examining relevant parts of general election manifestos, while from 2010 onwards, when the party got back to government, their positions, were also explored through policy framework of the Coalition government, which is given particular attention because of its importance in terms of policymaking.

##### ***4.3.1 Conservative Party manifestos in opposition***

This subsection gives a brief overview of the Conservative Party positions in chronological order, presented in their manifestos for General Elections 2005-2015 and the evolution of the British immigration policy under the Coalition. Under the leadership of Michael Howard, who led the party to the 2005 general election, the Conservative's approach to immigration was characterised by the infamous phrase: "Are you thinking, what we're thinking? It's not racist to impose limits on immigration" (The Conservative Party, 2005: 1; 17-18). In this manifesto, the Conservative Party proposed the introduction of a points-based system for work migration and set an annual cap for non-

EU migration. The manifesto also recognised the importance of public opinion in determining the scope of further immigration. Discourse around immigration started to be interconnected with welfare, namely issues around the National Health Service (NHS). The manifesto underlined that:

We will introduce health checks for immigrants in order to curb the spread of diseases such as TB and to protect access to our NHS. It is, after all, a national service, not a world health service. People coming to Britain from outside of the EU will be required to undergo a full medical test. And anyone settling permanently here from outside the EU will have to demonstrate that they have an acceptable standard of health and that they are unlikely to impose any significant costs or demands on Britain's health system. (The Conservative Party, 2005: 13).

As the party lost the 2005 General Election, it was clear that the slogan of the Conservative's manifesto 'Are you thinking what we're thinking?' did not reflect public opinion and that the party needed to come up with a new strategy to broaden its electorate. With the election of David Cameron as the new leader of the Conservatives in 2005, the party had chosen to soften its rhetoric on immigration as it wanted to increase its voter support and attract more moderate voters. As mentioned previously, the party did not focus on immigration before 2007, but the closer it got to the General Election, the approach of the Conservative Party has changed and the 2010 manifesto demonstrates that the rhetoric has become more restrictive. The manifesto pledges on immigration suggested setting up a cap for the number of immigrants coming to the country, by introducing a cap of "tens of thousands, not hundreds of thousands... and limiting access only to those who will bring the most value to the British economy" (The Conservative Party, 2010: 21). Recognising that the failure of the Labour government to introduce transitional controls for Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004, the Conservatives insisted in the application of 'transitional controls as a matter of course in the future for all new EU member states' (The Conservative Party, 2010: 21). Furthermore, in order to achieve the net migration target of tens of thousands, the party proposed to introduce bonds that overseas students pay when they start their degree, a bond that will be returned to a student upon the completion of degree and upon departure (The Conservative Party, 2010: 21). Finally, in order to apply for a work permit or a new

course, students need to go back to their country of origin to reapply and they cannot automatically switch inside the UK (The Conservative Party, 2010: 21). Such measures targeted reducing numbers of students coming to study to the UK and were intended to prevent students from getting access to the British labour market.

#### ***4.3.2 Conservative Party's immigration position in the Coalition government***

Immigration underwent a major transformation over the five-year period of the Coalition government. Different pillars of immigration policy, including students, work and family, were affected. Student migration had been tightened, when in 2012 home secretary Theresa May announced cancellation of the post-study work visa for students, which curtailed their right to work in the UK for two years after graduating (Home Office, 2011). In order to reduce family migration, in summer 2012, the Home Office introduced a financial requirement for British citizens and residents, whose immediate family members want to join them in the UK for residency purposes (Home Office, 2014; Home Office, 2017). According to the new rules, an £18,600 threshold was put in place, meaning British citizens, who want to bring their non-EU family member into the country need to earn more than the above-mentioned income threshold per year. At that time, immigration minister James Brokenshire commented: "We welcome those who wish to make a life in the UK with their family, work hard and make a contribution, but family life must not be established in the UK at the taxpayer's expense and family migrants must be able to integrate" (Home Office, 2014). Despite the attempts to challenge this decision, the Royal Court of Justice rejected the appeal against the Home Office and therefore justified the financial threshold of £18,600 as legitimate (Travis, 2014). Work migration was not an exception and this route was also affected by the introduction of quota and income thresholds for highly skilled migrants from non-EU countries. Thus, a limit of 20, 700 people per year for TIER 2 General workers was introduced in 2011, while intracompany transfers were not limited by the numbers of people coming in, but by minimum pay thresholds, which were set at £24, 000 for those coming under a year and £40, 000 for those coming for more than one year (Metcalf, 2013).

As the Coalition government could not limit EU migration in terms of numbers because of the free movement of persons, it came up with a different route to discourage EU immigration to the UK. Thus, immigration became intertwined with welfare issues through the change of welfare rules for the EU migrants. The Department for Work and Pensions' new rules were introduced to limit migrant access to out-of-work benefits.

From 1 of July 2014, jobseekers arriving in the UK will need to live in the country for three months in order to claim Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. Migrant jobseekers already face a three-month wait before they can claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Furthermore, 'after 3 months migrants will also have to take a stronger, more robust Habitual Residence Test if they want to claim income-based JSA; if they meet the conditions for entitlement, EEA jobseekers will only be able to get JSA, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit for 6 months - after 6 months, only those who have a job offer or compelling evidence that they have a genuine chance of finding work will be able to continue claiming, and then only for a short period. (UK Government, 2014a).

The Coalition government redefined access to benefits from universal to those based on the residency period in the UK and on the employment status of an EU citizen. Immigration was reframed through a social welfare lens, meaning that the new rules put in place were aiming to make the country less attractive for potential migrants and subsequently reduce net migration levels. In addition to restricting out-of-work benefits for EU and EEA jobseekers, the government announced that starting from April 2014 all EU jobseekers will no longer be able to claim Housing Benefit, apart from those EU nationals that are self-employed or in employment (UK Government, 2014b). Finally, just in a month before the 2015 general election, on the 6th of April 2015, the Coalition government introduced the so-called NHS surcharge, which required that non-EEA nationals, coming to reside in the UK for more than six months should pay a 'health surcharge' to get access to the NHS (UK Government, 2015). The surcharge was also applicable to those non-EEA nationals already in the UK, who wish to apply to prolong their stay. The surcharge was to be paid for the total period of the stay and was set at £200 per year and £150 per year for students, with the whole amount paid up front, while making visa application (UK Government, 2015). These key examples highlight that the detoxification strategy of the Conservative Party was abandoned the closer the party got to 2010 general election and when the party entered the Coalition government and

translated its discourse into restrictive immigration policies that gradually became intertwined with welfare issues. This chapter explains why this happened, exploring the factors that led the Conservative Party to change its immigration stance. Even though the party was in a Coalition with the Liberal Democrats, where the latter had a say as well, the department charged with immigration - the Home Office and, the department responsible for welfare policy - Department for Work and Pensions were both headed by the Conservative ministers, which allowed the Conservatives to steer immigration policy mostly in their direction.

#### **4.3.3 Conservative Party manifesto 2015**

The 2015 general election manifesto shows the continuity of the restrictive immigration stance of the Conservative party. Welfare anxieties linked to EU immigration were at the forefront of their immigration discourse with the Conservatives pledging to control immigration from the EU by “reforming welfare rules” (The Conservative Party, 2015: 30). More interestingly, for the first time since David Cameron became a leader, the party openly stated the importance of putting “British people first” (The Conservative Party, 2015: 29)<sup>2</sup>. This nativist rhetoric, which is a defining feature of radical right parties, who aim to prioritise the native population (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990), was now part of the Conservative Party’s discourse. The party also promised to further increase the financial income threshold for those British citizens, who want to bring their non-EU family to the UK (The Conservative Party, 2015: 30). The discourse around family migration emphasised the costs of family migrants to a taxpayer.

Hence, both EU and non-EU immigration has continued to be reframed through a social welfare lens as the party’s proposals outlined that access to benefits, including tax credits, will be based on length of residency (The Conservative Party, 2015: 30). This

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<sup>2</sup> This rhetoric brings to mind the long history of nativist language in Conservative discourse with a famous example of Enoch Powell’s speech ‘Rivers of blood’. However, such discourse was not unique to the Conservative Party, this also brings to mind Gordon Brown’s concession on “British jobs for British workers” (Summer, 2009), which may have normalised nativist language in British political discourse.

idea was developed during the Brexit debate, with the party arguing that EU immigrants can only claim benefits after four years of residence in the UK and talking about limiting child benefit for some EU migrants. Such rhetoric portrays immigrants as benefit seekers and downplays or denies their contribution to the society: “Instead of something-for-nothing, we will build a system based on the principle of something-for-something” (The Conservative Party, 2015: 30). The following table presents key positions of the Conservative Party on immigration since 2005, derived from their general election manifestos and highlights major immigration policy changes of the Coalition government.

Table 2: Conservative Party's rhetoric on immigration from 2005-2010 and immigration policy changes under the Coalition government

2005 Manifesto government	2010 Manifesto	Coalition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 surveillance at border posts;</li> <li>• points-based system for work migration;</li> <li>• annual cap for work migration (non-EU);</li> <li>• popular consent for further demographic change;</li> <li>• welfare: introduce TB tests to protect the NHS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set a cap for net migration: tens of thousands;</li> <li>• set an annual limit on the numbers of non-EU economic migrants;</li> <li>• selective immigration: limit access to those, who can bring value to the British economy;</li> <li>• apply transitional controls for future new members of the EU;</li> <li>• make foreign students pay a bond that will be reimbursed once they finish their studies and return to their country;</li> <li>• students cannot switch into a different category while in the UK, they need to go back home and reapply for a new visa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tighter regulations for non-EU/non-EEA students and cancellation of post study work visa in 2012, which allowed students to stay and work in the UK for two years after graduation;</li> <li>• family migration was tightened: the financial requirement of £18,600 earning for the UK spouse;</li> <li>• the Highly skilled migrant programme closed;</li> <li>• the annual limit for shortage occupations for non-EU migrants set at 20,700;</li> <li>• increased financial thresholds for work migration;</li> <li>• welfare: EU jobseekers are no longer able to claim housing benefit since April 2014;</li> <li>• welfare: a set of measures restricting access to out-of-work benefits, child benefit and child tax credit by EU and EEA immigrants was introduced in July 2014;</li> <li>• April 2015: NHS health surcharge introduced for all non-EU/non-EEA immigrants coming to reside in the UK for more than 6 months.</li> </ul>



#### **4.4 Causal factors**

The Conservative Party had been out of government for thirteen years, which had an impact on their policy positions on certain issues, especially on the issue of immigration. While, after losing the 2005 general election, the party tried to detoxify its image and become more attractive to the electorate, the approach changed in advance of getting into office, when different strands of immigration policy became more restrictive. The immigration stance of the Conservative Party and the UK immigration policy underwent significant transformations since the election of David Cameron as a party leader, as a response to a variety of factors. This chapter points out that despite being a junior partner in the Coalition government, Liberal Democrats had little control over immigration policy and were overshadowed by the Conservatives, who were effectively running it alone. Intensely negative coverage of immigration in the right-wing media led the Conservative Party and the Home Office to frame immigration in a more restrictive light and introduce policies that would not necessarily be evidence based, but driven by ideological inclinations. The arrival of the global financial crisis and subsequent Eurozone crisis led to the toughening of immigration discourse, but austerity, brought by the crisis, did not lead to the reframing of immigration through social welfare lens. The effects of EU integration presented constraints for controlling EU migration, which reinforced the Conservative's stance on EU migration, linking it to social security anxieties and eventually leading to the Brexit referendum.

##### **4.4.1 Public opinion**

Public opinion was the backbone of the Conservative's immigration policy-making process. Before the 2010 general election, immigration was one of the top five prominent issues and the voters, dissatisfied with the Labour Party, viewed the Conservative Party as the most credible on the issue (Carey and Geddes, 2010: 853). As a result of the absence of transitional controls with then ten countries that joined the EU in 2004, UK had experienced a substantial inflow of labour immigrants from the Eastern states, which led to the shift in public opinion in favour of more restrictive immigration policy (Park et al., 2012). Public dissatisfaction with the development of immigration policy created an

opportunity for the Conservatives to act and to introduce in their 2010 electoral manifesto a pledge of reducing immigration to “tens of thousands” (Conservative Party, 2010). This vote-winning strategy was not an invention of the Conservative Party itself, but of the right-wing interest group MWUK, with the Conservatives having to decide on their specific numerical target (Interview with the MWUK, 2015). MWUK successfully lobbied the Conservative Party before 2010 general election to include the electoral promise of putting a cap on immigration, which was an attempt to reassure the public that immigration was taken seriously by the party. As immigration was, in the eyes of significant numbers of voters in key constituencies, becoming one of the “main issues facing Britain today” (Page, 2009), the Conservatives needed to stress the importance of immigration for them. As the party, who had been out of government for thirteen years and wanted to get back, their strategy was centred around pleasing the public (Interview with a former Special Advisor (SpAD) to a Conservative minister 2015). The attachment to the immigration target was an important way of showing that the party cared about pleasing the public. Furthermore, it was important to reassure the electorate about this commitment as under the Coalition government net migration level was at its highest level and in 2013 almost 60 per cent of the population favoured reducing immigration (Page et al., 2013).

After the Conservatives were elected and throughout the Coalition government, they maintained the hard-line rhetoric on immigration to show that public opinion mattered to them. The Home Office was acting as an ideological machine, framing immigration in a light that would give the Conservative Party credibility. Fiona Cunningham and Nick Timothy, who were May’s special advisors in the Home Office, were acting as framers by highlighting that “Immigration numbers are falling because our reforms on immigration are working” (Interview with a former Home Office civil servant, 2015). This points to the power that special advisors exercised on the Home secretary, even when immigration statistics show contrary evidence. The decrease in immigration numbers did not correspond to reality and the Coalition government was able to decrease the numbers

only in the period between 2011-2013, but since 2013 the net migration level was on a steady increase (Office for National Statistics, 2017), primarily due to a lack of control over EU migration. The Home Office was a central immigration body of the government, which was creating an impression for the public that their policies are directed towards reducing the net migration level (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2016). For this reason, the Home Office alongside the Conservative Party only continued to reaffirm the attachment to the target, though knowing that they are unlikely to achieve it. Virtually all immigration policies adopted under the Coalition government were attached to the immigration target (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015). Throughout the Coalition government, the Conservatives were determined to maintain the hardline on immigration because they did not want to repeat the mistake of Liberal Democrats, who did not stick to their pledge of opposing the tuition fee rise, and abandon their electoral promises.

I think the other factor was that Liberal Democrats, my party, lost a lot of popularity because they made the pledge about student tuition fees and abandoned it. And Cameron saw what happened and he realised that he has made a pledge about immigration numbers and he did not want to be seen to abandon a pledge that he made in the election. (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS, Vince Cable, 2016).

Understanding that abandoning an electoral promise about immigration would not be beneficial in a future election, the Conservative Party kept their attachment to the net migration target. Thus, because of Clegg's turn on student tuition fees, in 2015 general election Liberal Democrats were completely wiped out by the Tories in South-West England (Merril, 2015). The Conservative Party was driven by the public perception on immigration, which underpinned their more restrictive immigration stance.

At the moment, it seems that this is about impression rather than about doing things that everybody recognises and knows and understands. (Interview with a Home Office civil servant, 2016).

The Conservatives had concerns about the alienation of the electorate, especially the British working class, as the party spent thirteen years in opposition and hoped for the reelection in 2015. With UKIP, who have been increasing the salience of immigration

and whose electoral support has been growing, the issue of welfare benefits for EU immigrants entered the right-wing agenda. By adopting an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards UKIP, the Conservative Party increased the salience of immigration and reframed it through a social welfare lens, especially during the Brexit debate.

The government's reframing of immigration through a social welfare lens was driven by the concerns of voter alienation, especially those working-class voters, who felt dissatisfied with the fact that immigrants' access to welfare benefits was means-tested rather than contributory (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015). What is interesting is that such a position was not unique to the Conservatives, it was a joint position of both parties of government and the fears of losing the public led to this reframing (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS, Vince Cable, 2016). Despite the Department for Work and Pensions' report (2012) that foreign-born people are less likely to claim benefits than British people, the Home Office and the Conservatives continued reframing immigration through social welfare lens, portraying immigrants as benefit-seekers. As the Conservatives were unable to control EU migration, which prevented them from achieving the net migration target, their discourse concentrated on pleasing the British public and focusing on negative portrayal of immigrants.

It's more a symbol rather than anything else. I think there is a very strong view, I mean the Home Office know that there is a very strong view, particularly amongst working class English people, British people generally that those, who haven't been born here, those, who are not citizens of this country should not be getting benefits from taxes raised in this country. (Interview with former Home Office civil servant, 2015).

It should be said that such rhetoric was not only coming from the Conservative Party, but that it was a joint position of two coalition partners, Liberal Democrats also were of the view that public concerns should not be disregarded, especially on the issue of welfare.

People here get very angry when they read that some Polish people have been here, working here and then they get back to Poland and they get family allowance and it creates a lot of anger. So, and I think you have to deal with that, those kind of abuses, otherwise you lose the public. (Interview with the head of BIS, Vince

Cable, 2016).

Overall, public opinion was one of the factors that underpinned the adoption of more a restrictive approach on immigration by the Conservative Party. The failure to win 2005 general election resulted in a detoxification strategy that aimed to attract more moderate electorate. However, Labour's decision not to impose transnational controls on the new EU member states has considerably weakened Labour's credibility on immigration, and the Conservative Party was able to capitalise on these concerns and present a more credible image before 2010 General election. Finally, UKIP's rise and its linking of immigration to welfare concerns, the alienation of the Conservative's electorate to UKIP, the importance of showing credibility on immigration led the Conservative Party to reinforce its immigration discourse and policies. Trying to please the public drove the evolution of the Conservative Party's immigration stance and demonstrated that their approach to immigration was not evidence-based, with the party framing immigration in a negative light on the issue of welfare benefits, despite the evidence to the contrary.

#### ***4.4.2 Perceived concerns over economic development***

The global financial crisis presented an opportunity for the party to reinforce its immigration position, but austerity, which was a response to the crisis was not the cause of the redefinition of immigration through social welfare lens.

Immigration policy is not always founded on logic, it is very much founded on politics, so that's it. People pretend it is founded on logic, but it very often founded on politics. (Interview with a senior Home Office servant, 2016).

The evidence from the interviews shows that the changes in the Conservatives discourse on immigration and Coalition immigration policies were not triggered by austerity, brought by the 2007 global financial crisis. The changes were driven by the political dynamics rather than by economic need (Interview with the senior Home Office servant, 2016). Thus, growing electoral support for UKIP changed party competition on the issue. In times of austerity, UKIP had fertile ground to appeal to the electorate, particularly to the working-class voters, who felt left out. As Rydgren (2003: 49) pinpoints:

... because of the feeling of anxiety, frustration, and resentment resulting from

poverty and unemployment, people finding themselves in situations of absolute deprivation have become increasingly susceptible to be attracted by political actors using xenophobic themes of welfare chauvinism, i.e., to put the blame of unemployment and financial problems of the welfare state on immigrants.

In terms of insecurity, radical right parties are presented with a fertile ground to appeal particularly to the working-class voters, who feel left out (Rydgren, 2003: 49). UKIP's 'welfare chauvinist' discourse and its electoral growth (Clarke et al., 2016) presented concerns for the Conservatives, who were becoming increasingly worried about the alienation of their electorate to UKIP. Even though the Conservatives have been framing immigration through social welfare lens, discourse and policies were rather stemming from the Conservative ideology that aims to limit the access to social assistance for everyone, irrespective of nationality (Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015). The aim was not just to reduce welfare entitlements for the immigrants, but to redefine British welfare system in general. The global financial crisis had an impact on toughening of immigration stance, but austerity, was not the driving force for reframing of immigration through social welfare lens. There was a shared attitude in the Coalition government that there was a very indirect connection between austerity and the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016; Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015). Framing of immigration through austerity lens was directed towards pleasing the public and preventing the alienation of the Conservative electorate to UKIP (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015; Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015).

The Conservative's tough immigration approach was driven by the economic anxieties related to intra-EU migration. The party argued that the Eurozone crisis led to large numbers of people coming in, which created a sense of insecurity and called into question the ability of the British economy to satisfy the demand (Interview with a Conservative minister, 2015; Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015; Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015). The relatively fast recovery of the UK economy from the global financial crisis, compared to Eurozone countries, attracted more intra-EU

migration, which was an obstacle for the party to achieve tens of thousands migration target (Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015). Preoccupation with the net migration target was also the logic behind the redefinition of immigration through a social welfare lens, despite evidence from the Department for Work and Pensions' report that foreign-born workers are less likely to claim benefits than British people (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). Furthermore, the party used global financial crisis to target student migration by decreasing the net migration level and limiting the numbers of those entering British labour market by introducing the closure of the post-study work visa in 2011 (Interview with the UUK, 2016). The crisis reinforced the Conservative's discourse on the impact of immigration on wages, arguing that it contributed to the suppression of wages as a result of increased migration from poorer Eurozone countries. The Home Office has been arguing that intra-EU immigration, particularly low-skilled migration from Eastern Europe had an effect on social dumping, despite the little evidence to support this argument (Interview with the chair of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) David Metcalf, 2015; Nickell and Saleheen, 2015). This demonstrates another example of the Conservative Party not basing its immigration stance on the evidence or manipulating the evidence.

On the contrary, the relatively fast recovery of the British economy from the global financial crisis presented a structure of opportunities that allowed the Conservatives to reinforce their discourse on immigration by claiming that immigrants are coming to the UK as they are attracted by the economy and job growth (Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015). The preoccupation with achieving net migration target was undermined by the numbers coming in and the inability to control intra-EU migration was frustrating for the Tories. As one of the interviewees pointed out:

The biggest simple thing that could happen that would enable the British government to hit the immigration target would be a widespread recovery of the Eurozone and the capacity of the governments of those countries to create jobs for the young residents (Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015).

The Conservative Party used the Eurozone crisis as an opportunity to pursue tougher immigration discourse on EU migration and to lead to the introduction of more restrictive policies regarding non-EU migrants as there was an opportunity to control only non-EU inflow. Conservatives developed an immigration discourse around economic anxieties, brought by EU migration to reinforce their position on achieving the net migration target. They argued that economic recession that came as a result of the global financial crisis affected many countries, but particularly southern European states, which resulted in an increased inflow of Italian, Spanish, Greeks, who entered the UK labour market (Interview with the Conservative MP, 2015; Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015). However, the estimates of the Office for National Statistics (2016: 11) show that in the period between 2007-2009 there was no sharp increase in migration from the EU countries, but on the contrary, with migration levels falling slightly in the middle of 2008 and then dropping even more by the end of the year. The Conservative Party argued that Eurozone crisis led to large numbers of people coming in, which created a sense of insecurity in the British economy, with the Conservatives becoming more cautious about the availability of jobs and the ability of the British economy to satisfy the demand (Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015). However, the data on immigration demonstrates that there was no drastic increase in the EU migration to the UK, which highlights that the Conservative Party used the Eurozone crisis to reinforce their immigration discourse, which was not based on evidence.

#### ***4.4.3 The rise of UKIP***

UKIP's rise over the last few years has alarmed established British political parties, not only on the right, but also on the left side of ideological spectrum. Ideological proximity makes the Conservative Party vulnerable to the defection of their voters to UKIP and the growing concern about UKIP began to accumulate at the time when the Conservatives were in the Coalition government. Even though first past the post electoral system kept UKIP away from Westminster, electoral support for UKIP grew slowly, but steadily over the years from 2001 to 2010, doubling in almost all UK regions (Ford & Goodwin, 2014: 87). If before 2010 UKIP faced internal conflicts and electoral failures, since then and



until the Brexit referendum it has transformed into a significant contender for mainstream parties. Indeed, “having overcome a series of false starts and vicious civil wars, it was only in 2010 when the party began to emerge as a cohesive and serious political organization” (Ford & Goodwin, 2014: 97). The Conservative Party’s stance on immigration started to become more stringent, particularly while in government, which was partly to do with the concerns about UKIP (Partos and Bale, 2015: 4). The Conservatives felt the need to act hard line to prevent its electorate from alienating to UKIP. The idea of the net migration target aimed to reassure the public that Conservatives were in control of immigration.

And that’s why we thought about the idea of limited net migration for each year, just to try to establish some level of control because it felt like immigration was uncontrolled and that had very bad social consequences. [...] And the other thing, is to discourage the growth of parties on the extremes. (Interview with the former Conservative minister, 2015)

This fear of UKIP is demonstrated particularly in relation to student migration, there was an absence of a unified position with major tensions occurring between the Home Office and the Prime Minister on one side, and the BIS and the Treasury on the other side. The Home Office’s refusal to take international students out of the net migration target was driven by the concern about UKIP (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable 2016; Interview with a former SpAD to a Conservative minister, 2015). Removing international students from the net migration target would have been detrimental to the Conservatives and would undermine the promise of reducing immigration to tens of thousands. The Electoral threat from UKIP only encouraged the Conservative Party to reinforce their position on the net migration target. The preoccupation of the Conservative Party with the net migration target was a response to constant criticism of the Tories by UKIP.

...one of the arguments you got back was ‘No, because this will encourage, because people who would otherwise vote Conservative would go to UKIP’... (Interview with a former SpAD to a conservative minister, 2015).

I think they worried, the Tories, before the last election. They seem to be... In truth, in the general election they lost one, but they got the other, but they still have got eleven per cent vote. But, I don’t think all the votes are taken away from Tories,

but I think more votes were taken away from Tories than from Labour. So, certainly that is the part of the factor. (Interview with the senior Home Office civil servant, 2015).

Furthermore, reframing immigration through a social welfare lens was driven by concerns about UKIP and by the aim to fulfil their immigration pledge. Being in control of non-EU migration, the Coalition government concentrated on limiting this inflow to reduce the overall numbers. Thus, by creating a tougher discourse on the issue the party and the Home Office were trying to reassure the public about their awareness of the concerns and trying to create a credible image. This did not only lead to changes in the Conservative discourse, but also resulted in the introduction of a financial requirement for British citizens who want to bring their family members to the UK. In July 2012, the government introduced a financial threshold of £18,600 for British citizens who want to bring their non-EU family members to the UK to decrease the overall net migration (Home Office, 2014).

And, I suppose, you know, if you want to bring your family here, should earn sufficient income to look after them, so, otherwise, they go on benefits. And it would be strong feelings of the British people about things like that (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2016).

The Department for Work and Pensions' new rules limited EU migrants' access to benefits, by introducing a three-month residency requirement for Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit (UK Government, 2014a). The government also announced that since April 2014 all EU jobseekers will no longer be able to claim Housing Benefit (UK Government, 2014b). The Coalition government redefined access to benefits from means-tested to residency-based to lower the attractiveness of the UK for potential migrants. It also introduced an NHS surcharge for non-EU nationals coming to reside in the UK for long-term just a month before 2015 general election (UK Government, 2015). It should be highlighted that by no means was UKIP the sole factor that led the Conservative Party to change their stance on immigration, but, as interviews revealed, it had an impact on the positions of the Conservatives regarding student migration and the toughening of welfare access for EU immigrants. Trying to prevent the

defection of its electorate to UKIP, especially during the Coalition government, when UKIP's popularity grew, the Conservative Party adopted an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards UKIP in attempt to reassure its credibility on immigration. Finally, the announcement of holding the referendum on Britain's exit from the EU was supposed to neutralise UKIP.

And, in truth, once you declare the referendum, it kinda shoots UKIP's fox because UKIP only exists to leave Europe. (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2016).

Overall, the potential defection of the electorate to UKIP was one of the drivers that the made Conservative's discourse and Coalition immigration policy more restrictive and also contributed to linking immigration to social security concerns by redefining immigration through a social welfare lens.

#### ***4.4.4 Effects of the EU integration***

Fagerholm (2015) argues that political parties respond to big socio-economic changes and this research has found that widening of the EU community and its effects led the Conservative Party to adopt a restrictive immigration approach. Immigration rhetoric returned to the Conservative's party discourse in 2007, when David Cameron gave a speech on the alleged population pressure, which was related to Romania's and Bulgaria's entrance to the EU in 2007. Both EU enlargements had an impact on the evolution of British immigration policy and were used by the Conservative Party to remind the voters that immigration was still an important issue for the party. The underestimation of EU immigration by the Labour government and public dissatisfaction with it was taken by the Conservatives as an opportunity to pursue a restrictive approach to EU migration (Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015). The absence of transnational agreements with Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 had an impact on Labour's credibility on immigration (Mulvey, 2011: 1486). This enlargement and the absence of transitional arrangements with newly accepted countries increased public concerns on the issue (Evans & Chzen, 2013: 155).

After 2005 the arrival of hundreds of thousands of A8 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia - *author*) countries, particularly Poles, obviously. These three things came together, so immigration became an enormous crisis. (Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015).

The UK's membership in the EU and the adherence to the free movement of people, presented an opportunity for the Conservative Party to reinforce its stance on immigration policy and, eventually, to declare the referendum on the UK's exit from the EU. More specifically, concerns about the EU, which manifested themselves in the lack of control over EU migration and the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and the UK law, allowed the Conservative Party to toughen its immigration discourse and policies and reframe immigration through a social welfare lens. Free movement of people and the lack of control over EU migration were big obstacles for the Conservatives to achieve their migration target. Despite tightening the rules for non-EU migrants, overall net migration did not decline because EU migration could not be restricted. Hence, both EU enlargements (2004 and 2007) changed the political circumstances and had an impact on the development of the Conservatives' rhetoric on immigration and subsequently the UK immigration policy under the Coalition government because they structured opportunities for the Conservative Party to restrict immigration. First the enlargement of ten new states in 2004 and the absence of transnational arrangements with newly accepted countries resulted in larger numbers coming in than expected. Having underestimated the pace of immigration from Eastern European states from 2004 enlargement, the Labour government put in place seven-year transitional controls for Bulgaria and Romania to access the UK labour market, the Conservatives used this to frame immigration discourse around economic anxieties over jobs. The reframing of immigration discourse happened through social welfare lens based on the increasing net migration levels and the impossibility to reduce EU inflow. The preoccupation of the Conservative Party with the target drove their discourse into the social security sphere.

They come here for work and they pay their taxes and contribute... However, if you have a small percentage that are not, but that small percentage itself is a large number, then it becomes an economic problem. It's a drain on public finances. So, the numbers do matter and that's the sort of truth when it comes to immigration policy. (Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015).

The necessity of cohesion between the EU law and the British law, essentially EU citizen's access to benefits, was another aspect of the loss of sovereignty that worried the Conservatives (Interview with the chair of the MAC, David Metcalf, 2016). The intersection between welfare and immigration emerged partly as a response to the inability to manage EU migration and more restrictive rules on accessing benefits for EU citizens aimed to discourage potential immigration to the UK (Interview with a former Conservative minister, 2015). Despite the lack of evidence on the subject of so-called EU 'benefits-tourism', the Conservative Party 'switched their attention to it because they knew they could do something about it' (Interview with the head of BIS Vince Cable, 2016). Reframing immigration through a social welfare lens became a salient point within the immigration debate, which is also evidenced by the fact that these points take a central role in the Brexit debate that followed. EU enlargements increased Conservative's concerns about the British labour market and the necessity of cohesion between British and EU law led to the introduction of more restrictive discourse and policies on EU migration.

#### ***4.4.5 The influence of interest groups***

The increasing salience of immigration was one of the factors that influenced Conservatives' immigration decision-making, both in opposition and under the Coalition government. Different interest groups played a crucial role in increasing immigration salience, both negatively and positively. Being outside of government for a long time, the Conservatives introduced net migration target of tens of thousands before 2010 general election because the salience of immigration was high and the party wanted to show its commitment to reducing it (Interview with a former SpAD to a Conservative minister, 2015; Interview with the MWUK, 2015). During the first two years, the Coalition government managed to reduce net migration, but from 2013 onwards immigration numbers were on a steady rise reaching its highest level in the UK history (Office for National Statistics, 2017). The inability of the government to lower immigration levels were continuously exploited by UKIP and by the right-wing media, which kept

immigration at the top of the agenda. This led the Conservatives to reinforce their stance on immigration because they needed to show their credibility on the issue (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016).

Government is far too influenced by the Daily Mail, papers like that. I have seen the political advisers trying to please the Daily Mail and trying to get the right stories and responding to the public concern. And they have far more impact on the government than they should, at least on this government. (Interview with the senior Home Office civil servant, 2016)

Immigration discourse and policies of the Coalition government became more restrictive because right-wing interest group MWUK had leverage to attack the Conservatives through British right-wing media, which would damage the party's image.

No, Cameron was frightened if he got the wrong side of Migration Watch, Migration Watch would tell the big newspapers and then who would then attack him. (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016).

Structural constraints put on the Conservative Party by the MWUK and right-wing media and the rise of UKIP steered the development of UK immigration policy in a more restrictive way. It has been established that interest groups' lobbying was a way of boosting immigration salience in order to influence immigration policy-making. However, some managed to exert greater influence on the government, compared to others. Because of the Home Office's preoccupation with the net migration target, only the proposals of those interest groups that aimed to limit immigration had more successful influence on government's decisions on immigration, while suggestions of those interest groups that did not have such interest were constrained. The attempts of the UUK to get international students out of the net migration target were ineffective because of the Home Office's strong attachment to getting immigration down to tens of thousands. Despite the support of the BIS, the issue was too politically important for the Home Office (Interview with a former SpAD to a Conservative Minister, 2015). Though, UUK efforts with the support of BIS were not completely unsuccessful, they managed to get some concession from the Home Office and prevent the introduction of a cap on international students and introduction of tougher language requirements (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016; Interview with the UUK, 2016; Portes, 2015).

#### ***4.4.6 Home Office's ideological dogmatism***

Among structural factors that led to the evolution of British immigration policy, the research has found that one agency related variable was crucial in making UK immigration policy more restrictive. This finding demonstrates that agency matters, and not only the agency of political parties, but also the agency of governmental departments like the Home Office that is responsible for immigration policy. It shows that the agency, namely the Home Office's actions, transform the environment, or the structure, in which the change is happening, which points out to the importance of not disregarding the role of the agency. In pursuing its goals, the Home Office and the home secretary were putting ideological beliefs before the evidence. Control over agenda setting and evidence were instrumental parts of the Home Office's ideological dogmatism. Only evidence in support of the Home Office's position, was made public, while any other evidence that would contradict the Home secretary's position and goals would not be commissioned or made public (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016; Interview with the UUK, 2016). The inability of certain interest groups like UUK to approach the home secretary to present evidence that would be different from the Home Office's position was also a way of controlling evidence channeled for the decision-making process. A key role in immigration agenda setting allowed the Home Office to frame immigration in a light suitable for the Home office and avoid presenting evidence that would be contrary to the Home Office's goals. Control over evidence was a tool that Home Office and the home secretary used in advancing their position on immigration. More precisely, Home Office's ideological dogmatism had a profound impact particularly on student migration, and the battles between the Home Office and the BIS illustrate the importance of putting ideology before the evidence. Control over agenda setting allowed the Home Office to argue for keeping students within the net migration target as Theresa May would not ask the MAC to conduct any work on the issue. Student migration was the biggest migration route and producing any kind of positive evidence on student migration would be detrimental for the Home Office because it would limit the chances to reduce migration to tens of thousands.

And also, the home secretary only asks the MAC the questions that she wants to. For example, there are other things that MAC has not been asked to do, but which could be really helpful for it to do. So, something like asking the MAC to conduct the analysis of the benefits of international students for the UK, taking in to account the costs as well, but also what is the overall benefit at a national level. But this is the question the home secretary is not going to ask because it doesn't correspond to her objectives. (Interview with the UUK, 2016).

The Home Office's ideological dogmatism had a profound impact on student migration, labour migration and issues of welfare tourism. The battles between the Home Office and the BIS on getting students out of the net migration target, on the so-called EU welfare tourism and on the suppression of British wages illustrate the importance of putting ideology before evidence. Control over agenda setting allowed the Home Office to argue for keeping international students in the net migration target and the home secretary would not commission any work on student migration because producing any kind of positive evidence on student migration would be detrimental for the Home Office (Interview with the chair of the MAC, David Metcalf, 2015; Interview with the UUK, 2016). The home secretary argued for the reduction of welfare benefits for EU migrants despite the evidence that they were less likely to access benefits than British citizens (Department for Work and Pensions, 2012). The Home Office also argued that high levels of immigration contributed to the displacement of British workers on the labour market, which illustrates how the Home Office's ideological dogmatism prevailed over the evidence.

I think there were ten - twelve studies. One of them showed that there was some displacement, in fact, particularly in periods of recession and low-paid workers. The others did not show the displacement, in fact. But what happened was propaganda war: the Home Office released the one study that suited their arguments. We had a leaking and.... we got this summary of research and I pressed for it to be published. The home secretary refused to allow it to be published because it showed the wrong conclusions. Then they leaked to the newspapers the one study that showed what they wanted to show. (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS, Vince Cable, 2016).

Finally, the lack of communication between the home secretary and other governmental actors was another feature of Home Office's ideological dogmatism, which meant that the decisions on immigration were introduced from the top-down and Theresa May was not interested in the collective discussion of the policy with the shadow cabinet. Thus,



while the Conservative Party was in opposition, there was a lack of collective discussion on how migration policy should look like, which created sense of frustration within the Conservative Party.

I still remember the day, which was in opposition before we got into government and David Willetts came into our office and said: 'Theresa May just announced a new policy on migration reducing to tens thousands...What does it mean for students?'. And none of us knew what it meant for students because the policy doesn't seem to have ever been discussed collectively by the Shadow cabinet. And I think the whole problem stems partly from that (Interview with a SpAD to a Conservative minister, 2015).

Preoccupation with achieving the net migration target was driving immigration policy-making and the Home Office played a crucial role in defending this electoral pledge despite the fact that its position did not always reflect the evidence (Interview with the senior Home Office civil servant, Interview with the UUK, 2016; Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015). This did not only put ideology before evidence, but also created a sense of frustration within the Conservative Party, because a lot of Conservative MPs viewed the target as damaging for the British economy. The idea of achieving a net migration target drove the Home Office's decision to close the post-study work visa, despite the suggestions from the MAC of making it more selective rather than completely shutting it down (Interview with chair of the MAC David Metcalf, 2015). It led to the introduction of more selective approach to work migration, increasing the salary threshold for non-EU migrants and threshold for intra-company transfers (Metcalf, 2013). Finally, it permitted the Home Office to introduce set of rules, which redefined EU migrants' access to benefits from means-tested to residency-based.

#### **4.5 Causal mechanisms**

The goal of this chapter was not only to provide a causal explanation of the changing nature of the Conservative's stance on immigration and subsequent immigration policy change, but also to shed the light on the mechanisms that allowed particular policy choices to dominate. The main finding of this section is that two mechanisms account for the change, namely framing and departmental competition. While framing of immigration in a negative light was a prerequisite for the party to opt for more restrictive policy choices

during the Coalition government, departmental competition is a mechanism through which certain policy choices dominated over others. While being both in opposition and in government, the Conservatives framed immigration in a restrictive way, which eventually led the party to take responsibility for its rhetoric and pursue tighter immigration policies. However, the Conservative Party was not the only one to have been framing immigration in a negative light, there were other governmental actors like the Home Office and the home secretary, who contributed to the hard-line immigration stance. As actors responsible for immigration matters, they were a significant voice of framing the issue negatively. Moreover, non-governmental actors also took the opportunity to increase the salience of the issue in the media, forcing the Conservative Party to react. Precisely, the right-wing interest group MWUK presented a very specific image of the state of UK immigration policy in the right-wing British media, which made the Conservatives worried about their image as a credible party to handle immigration. Framing of immigration in a specific light was a prerequisite for the party to opt for more restrictive policy choices during the Coalition government. Departmental competition is a mechanism through which certain policy choices dominated over the other ones. Finally, the competition did not limit itself to two Coalition partners, but the differences in policy choices occurred between the departments led by the Conservatives.

#### ***4.5.1 Framing***

The immigration discourse of the Conservative party between 2005 and 2015 has become more restrictive by attributing blame for social problems to immigrants. The Conservatives used diagnostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) to establish that immigrants and growing levels of immigration were bad for British society because they were bringing more anxieties about social welfare, jobs and security. Diagnostic framing was a justification for tougher immigration policies that the Conservatives adopted once they got to the Coalition government in 2010. Their 2010 and 2015 general election manifestos represented prognostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) of immigration, suggesting the general line of action that needed to be taken to decrease immigration levels. Throughout their time in the Coalition government, they have

combined socio-cultural and economic frames and did not increase the salience of one issue (immigration) at the expense of another (welfare), but reframed a sociocultural cleavage through the lens of the economic one. Immigration was politicised by the Conservatives through the concepts of social policy like 'welfare chauvinism' (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990), which meant restricting welfare access to British citizens. Even though the party has not campaigned for complete denial of benefit access for immigrants, it has repeatedly argued for restricting access to welfare entitlements based on the length of residency and contribution. The Conservative Party was attributing the blame to immigrants, by claiming that they are "a drain on the British social welfare system" to please the public (Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015; Interview with a Conservative minister, 2015). However, the intention to cut benefits for migrants was more a sign of conservative ideology, which aimed to restrict access to social assistance for everyone (Interview with a Conservative MP, 2015). This was clearly demonstrated with their welfare policies that were not only targeting immigrants, but also disabled people and low-income families. Former deputy prime minister Nick Clegg in an interview to *the Guardian* newspaper claimed that the Conservatives did cut welfare for the poorest to boost Conservative's popularity (Asthana and Hatterstone, 2016). The Home Office was often driven more by politics rather than by evidence (Interview with the senior Home Office civil servant 2015; Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016). Nick Clegg admitted that the home secretary was framing immigration in a way beneficial to the home secretary and her party:

She kept saying there was this terrible 'abuse' of freedom of movement, when simply describing EU citizens exercising their right to come and work in the UK. They tried to insert statistics suggesting the number of UK citizens living and working in other EU countries was half a million lower than any other mainstream estimate (Clegg cited in Asthana and Hatterstone, 2016).

Within the Home Office, unelected special advisors to the home secretary had enormous influence on the framing of immigration and were deciding how the issue would be presented to the wider public. Special advisors were acting as framers, who had considerable power and were responsible for framing immigration in a light that was

showing the successes of the Home Office's policies even though it was not always the case. They were deciding on the content of her immigration speeches and always had the last say in them.

Because they were not interested in getting things right, they just wanted to do it the way they wanted. A lot of time, I think Theresa May knew directly what they were doing and they were thinking they were entitled to the decisions because they were working for her. They always wanted me to put the phrase 'immigration numbers are falling because our reforms on immigration are working'. Political policies are about trying to persuade people that things are happening when they aren't really happening. (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015).

The role of special advisors to the home secretary was crucial in determining how immigration was framed for the public (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015). This highlights the importance of the agency in activation of the mechanisms that account for immigration policy change. Unelected special advisors to Theresa May exercised a considerable amount of power and were responsible for the correct framing of immigration, deciding on the content of home secretary's speeches. It should be said that their power with regard to immigration was only on the level of political discourse, but did not affect any major policy decisions (Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, 2015).

Apart from the Conservative Party and the Home Office, there was another important actor that framed immigration negatively and had an influence on immigration decision-making process. MWUK also contributed to the negative framing of immigration, by lobbying for restrictive immigration policies in right-wing British newspapers (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016). MWUK was advocating their views on immigration and spreading the message across the Conservative Party by briefing the special advisors to ministers, because there was more accessibility to ministers' special advisors rather than to those from the Home Office, which was an effective way to get the message across (Interview with the MWUK, 2015). Knowing that MWUK had leverage on immigration salience in the right-wing media, Conservatives took a hard line on immigration to prevent its electorate from defecting to UKIP (Interview

with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016). Framing was the only available mechanism for the Conservative Party while it was in opposition because the party did not have any decision-making powers, but once the party got back to the office and formed a Coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, then, in addition to framing, the competition among governmental departments shaped British immigration policy.

#### ***4.5.2 Departmental competition***

In an important sense the competition between governmental departments was the primary mechanism shaping the UK immigration policy under the Coalition government. Framing was still present because it shaped their immigration discourse, but departmental competition determined the actual process of immigration policy-making. Its essence was that the departments did not have the same views on the content of immigration policies and that their views were different from those of the Home Office. In the Coalition government the clashes were not only between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, but also within the Conservative Party. The explanation for why certain ideas won over the others lies within the availability of resources that particular departments had compared to others. Resources, it should be said, do not here imply simply financial capital that the departments had in their disposition, but rather the political authority, support and decision-making powers.

This competition took a shape of consistent security-economy debate between the Home Office and the BIS. BIS made numerous efforts to neutralise Home Office's restrictive policies, however with limited success. It prevented the introduction of a cap for international students and the introduction of more advanced English language requirements (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS, Vince Cable, 2016). The institutional constraint of being in a Coalition government restrained the choices of the Liberal Democrats on immigration policy, but, at the same time, being a Coalition partner, allowed the Liberal Democrats to act as a brake on the policies proposed by the Conservatives and the Home Office. With the support of the deputy prime minister Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrats were able to influence immigration policy-making, because

the Conservative Party could not completely disregard the view of its Coalition partner. The lack of communication between the home secretary and other governmental actors and departments led to numerous tensions and misunderstandings, particularly on student migration, not only between Coalition partners, but also between the Conservative Party MP's (Interview with a SpAD to a Conservative minister, 2015).

Departmental competition within the government led to the implementation of more restrictive immigration policies because the Home Office and the home secretary had the prime minister's patronage in immigration policy making. Previous research has arrived to similar conclusion (Hampshire and Bale, 2015). The example of the policy on including international students in the net migration target demonstrates how restrictive policy choices dominated with institutional constraints influencing the choices of departments. The tensions between economic BIS and the Treasury, on one hand, and, the political Home Office, on the other hand, indicated the diversity in policy preferences. BIS, led by the Liberal Democrat Vince Cable, alongside the Ministry for the Universities and Skills, led by a conservative minister David Willetts fought hard to get international students out of the net target. But despite the Treasury's agreement with the argument, it did not officially go against the Home Office because of the institutional constraints of being outvoted in the cabinet meetings (Interview with a former SPaD to a Conservative minister, 2015). The ideas of the Home Office and the home secretary dominated as they had prime minister's patronage, which gave the home secretary the authority to pursue a more restrictive approach. Prime minister's patronage was key in the development of the UK immigration policy because it gave the home secretary the authority to pursue more restrictive approach.

The Home Office has control over immigration, but actually David Cameron and Number 10, he is the prime minister, you know, he could sack Theresa May if he wanted to. Number 10 got really frustrated [...] saying that "why are you lobbying Number 10 not to support the Home Office? It's prime minister's job to support the Home Secretary". (Interview with a former SpAD to a Conservative minister, 2015).

The prime minister and the home secretary acted as a unified front, and even in the case if disagreements between them existed, they were not made public. Despite the opposition to some immigration policies not only from the Liberal Democrats, prime minister's patronage allowed the home secretary to pursue her view of immigration policy. However, the importance of the prime minister's ultimate control cannot be underestimated and that he always had the last word in immigration policy-making. Thus, when originally thought limitation of intra-company transfers (ICT) by quantity was not accepted by David Cameron, MAC came up with the idea to limit the ICT by price (introducing minimum salary threshold) (Interview with the chair of the MAC, David Metcalf, 2015). Immigration policy was driven by the Home Office and the Home secretary, but in the case of disagreements, the apparatus of the Number 10 was an ultimate decision-making authority. The malfunctioning of control mechanisms allowed the home secretary to pursue her line on immigration. Although consequential migration policy changes required a collective discussion within the government, the mechanisms that could have prevented the implementation of certain policies or ideas were not viable.

And if the Home Office wants a really big migration change, it still has to get a collective sign off even though it has sole control over policy, there is still a mechanism, where it has to tell the other bits of government. [...] I spoke to someone who used to be on the Home Affairs committee, the former minister and he said: "Theresa May would bring those ideas to Home Affairs committee and everybody there would say it's a bad idea and she will just get back to the Home Office and do it anyway because there isn't really a mechanism for checking". (Interview with a former SpAD to a Conservative minister, 2015).

It is not strictly true that there was no mechanism for checking, because there was an option for the cabinet to outvote Theresa May in collective discussions, but the prime ministerial patronage that she had, was making the control mechanisms like full cabinet less likely to have been activated. The immigration policies could have been even more restrictive if the Liberal Democrats did not act as a consistent brake on the policies the Home Office and the home secretary wanted to pursue (Interview with the UUK, 2016; Interview with the secretary of state for BIS, Vince Cable, 2016; Interview with the Home Office civil servant, 2015). The Conservatives were responsible for the major toughening in the UK immigration policy under the Coalition government because they had more

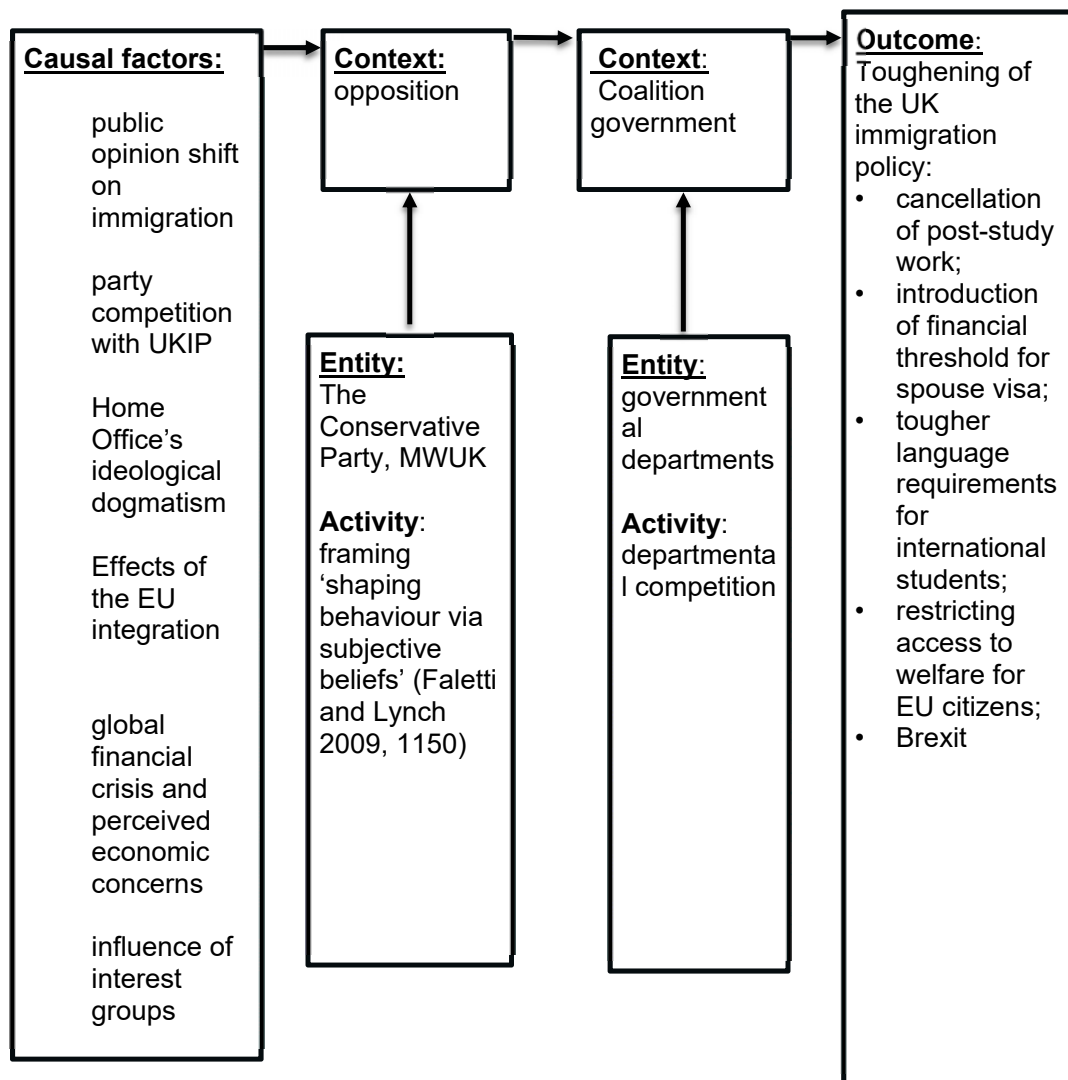


Figure 1: Causal chain of the change of British immigration policy change

leverage, more resources and the Home Office and the home secretary had prime minister's patronage on the issue. Immigration policies under the Coalition government could have been even more restrictive if the Liberal Democrats would not have acted as a constraint on the Conservative Party and the Home Office. Liberal Democrats' major gains on immigration were in the field of student migration. They prevented the introduction of quotas for international students and the introduction of higher English language requirement for international students, which the Home Office lobbied for (Interview with the secretary of state for BIS Vince Cable, 2016; Interview with the UUK, 2016). The Home Office compromised on certain issues because it was a Coalition



government and the views of the Liberal Democrats could not be completely ignored by the Conservatives. However, the main difficulty that the Liberal Democrats faced in pushing their position on immigration is that they were the minor partner and could have been outvoted in cabinet discussions, which was a major institutional constraint. As it was a coalition, certain compromises were made, but the Conservative Party managed to change UK immigration policy in a way that was much more suitable for them than for the Liberal Democrats.

#### ***4.5.3 Causal chain of the change in Conservative's immigration stance and evolution of the British immigration policy***

The last part of this chapter offers an account of a complete causal chain of Conservative's change on immigration in opposition and within the Coalition government. As Beach and Pedersen (2008: 30) highlight for a mechanism to occur, there should be a presence of both entity and activity in order to produce an outcome.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Changes in immigration stance of the Conservative Party and subsequent UK immigration policy change is explained through a set of exogenous factors that influenced the Conservative's decision-making. Shifts in public opinion, the rise of UKIP, perceived economic anxieties of the public over immigration, the effects of the EU integration and the increasing the salience of immigration by interest groups like the MWUK led the Conservative Party to toughen their immigration stance. Process tracing established that those factors influenced the Conservative Party's stance, but did not identify which ones played a more important role than others. Hypothesis five, that the global financial crisis, was a cause of linking immigration to social security concerns and redefining of immigration through social welfare lens was disconfirmed. Immigration policy was driven more by political dynamics rather than by economic need and this reframing was driven by the lack of control over EU migration and the impossibility to achieve the net migration target. Hypothesis six, that perceived identity anxieties underpinned Conservative's logic on immigration policy change was disconfirmed as

there was no evidence found in the analysis of the data that supported this claim. Furthermore, the analysis of elite interviews pointed to two more factors that led the Conservatives to adopt more restrictive immigration stance. First, partial loss of sovereignty to the EU on immigration policy and on welfare redistribution for EU migrants led to the more restrictive immigration stance on EU migration, which eventually resulted in declaring the Brexit referendum. Second, the analysis of interviews revealed that Home Office's ideological dogmatism was one of the agency-related factors that underpinned the introduction of restrictive immigration policies. Thus, Home Office's ideological dogmatism put ideology before evidence and manifested itself in the control over agenda setting and over evidence. It allowed the home secretary to steer immigration policy in the direction suitable for her, which signalled that the Home Office's approach was not evidence based, but was driven by a policy aimed at reducing the net migration target by all means.

The Conservative's approach to social security concerns was not only limited to EU migrants, it was about neoliberal preference for the party to limit welfare for everybody, including British citizens. Even though structural factors were responsible for the change, agency was crucial in choosing particular structures that shaped its choices. The Home Office's control over agenda setting, evidence twisting and lack of communication among governmental departments were instrumental in pursuing more restrictive immigration stance. This demonstrates that structures are not immune to the influence of the agency and that there is a two-way relationship between structure and agency.

Two major mechanisms allowed the Conservative Party to pursue more a restrictive immigration discourse. Framing was an argumentative mechanism that allowed the Conservatives, the Home Office and the MWUK to argue for more restrictive immigration policy. The competition between governmental departments was the mechanism responsible for immigration policy making, shaping the UK immigration policy under the Coalition government. This manifested itself in numerous tensions between the Home

Office on one hand, and BIS, on the other hand, especially on the topic of student and labour migration. However, the clashes between did not only affect two coalition partners, but also were happening within the Conservative Party. The explanation for why certain ideas won over the others lies within the availability of resources that particular departments had compared to others. By resources it is not necessarily meant financial capital that the departments had in their disposition, but rather political authority, decision-making powers and support from other political actors. The Home Office and the home secretary were able to pursue their immigration policy stance because they had prime minister's patronage that allowed them to steer the policy in their direction. However, Liberal Democrats as a coalition partner had certain leverage on decision-making, but it was much less than they expected to have had.

The findings suggest that, despite the importance of exogenous factors, agency cannot be disregarded by pointing to the Home Office's ideological dogmatism as crucial in shaping British immigration policy in a restrictive direction. The Home Office's control over immigration agenda setting and evidence was possible as the home secretary had the prime minister's patronage on the issue. This finding highlights that theories that explain party position change from agency related explanations (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Janda et al., 1995; Harmel and Tan, 2003) should consider a new dimension of political patronage of powerful actors within the party that make some policy choices prevail over the other ones.

## Chapter 5

### **Immigration policy and the SVP: resisting the EU and fighting Switzerland's so-called 'Islamisation'**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

On the 9th of February 2014 the Swiss people voted in favour of limiting EU migration to Switzerland. The Initiative Against Mass Migration, launched by the conservative SVP (UDC in French translation, Union Démocratique du Centre), was aimed to restrict immigration from the EU and undermine the free movement of people. The result of the initiative showed the dissatisfaction with the free movement of people, to which Switzerland adhered in 1999. SVP played a key role in the success of the Initiative as it has always been a proponent of limiting migration and has maintained its hard line Eurosceptic stance since the theme of Swiss accession to the EU came onto the agenda in mid-1980s (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005: 152). By a tiny margin Swiss people supported the Initiative, with the majority of people (50.3 per cent) and the majority of cantons accepting it (Federal Office for Migration, 2014). The result of the Initiative became a critical juncture in Swiss immigration policy. Approaching the deadline for the implementation of the Initiative, in December 2016 Swiss parliament voted not impose quotas on immigration from the EU, but instead opted to safeguard Swiss economic interests by prioritising Swiss in the process of hiring for a job (Sécretariat d'Etat aux Migrations, 2017). This prioritisation concerns only certain professions, activities and economic regions that have average or higher than average unemployment rate (Maurisse, 2016). In the last three years the immigration debate was focused on the relationship between Switzerland and the EU, particularly on the issue of the free movement of persons. SVP's reaction to the implementation of the Initiative Against Mass Migration was negative, with the party accusing the government and the parliament for not following the will of the people (Nidegger, 2016). This Initiative was one of the key examples of SVP's attempts to make Swiss immigration policy more restrictive between 2003 and 2015.

The SVP has been a central actor in the Swiss immigration debate in the last twenty years, raising the salience of immigration on the national agenda. Immigration became a major issue on the party's agenda only in the 1990s, when the party shifted toward a more radical direction, which happened under the leadership of Blocher and yielded substantial electoral gains (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007: 93-94). The electoral rise of the SVP gave them the "ability to take control of the national political agenda" (Albertazzi, 2008: 100), with immigration becoming a major topic of Swiss political debates (Skenderovic, 2009). The party was becoming mainstream among Swiss voters and becoming the largest party in the National Council in 2003, by taking votes from two major right-wing parties FDP (Liberal party) and CVP (Christian Democratic party of Switzerland) (Lutz, 2006: 193). Thus, being the most popular party in Switzerland since 2003 and having immigration and Euroscepticism at the centre of its political agenda, SVP has been a major driver of immigration policy change.

Switzerland stands out from other European countries due to a number of features. First, Switzerland, not being a member of the EU cooperates with the Union through a set of bilateral agreements, which gives Switzerland more freedom from the EU than if it was a member state, but also imposes certain constraints. Second, the uniqueness of the Swiss political system of consensual democracy allows for the voices of smaller parties and groups to be represented while direct democracy makes the voices of the population heard, permitting smaller parties to have an influence on the policy-making process. As Afonso (2005: 656) pinpoints: "Every legal change proposed by the government is dependent upon the approval of all potential veto players who could launch a referendum, which makes the state only weakly autonomous vis-a-vis societal interests". Third, Switzerland has one of the highest shares of foreigners, which equals approximately twenty-five per cent to its population (Federal Statistical Office, 2016), which makes immigration a prominent topic on the political agenda. Since the 1960s, the Swiss population has grown from over five to over eight million people, mostly through migration (Nguyen and Mariani, 2014). Finally, the country's strong economy with

relatively its low unemployment rate of four per cent compared to the European average (OECD, 2017) is still largely dependent on foreign labour, yet the economic aspect of immigration still poses anxieties for the Swiss as it was highlighted by the 2014 Initiative Against Mass Migration.

The chapter identifies major exogenous factors that underpinned the evolution of the Swiss immigration policy and key causal mechanisms that account for immigration policy change in Switzerland between 2003 and 2015. It does this to demonstrate to what extent immigration policy change in Switzerland can be explained from a structuralist perspective and what role agency related factors play in the Swiss case.

#### **5.1.1 Argument**

Based on the hypotheses, established in chapter two, this chapter argues that between 2003 and 2015, the SVP contributed to the redefinition of the Swiss immigration policy in a more restrictive manner as a response to several factors, which are derived from the theories of party policy change. This chapter hypothesises that SVP's logic on immigration policy change was underpinned by the importance of the public opinion, which has also been massively engineered by the party over the years. It should be said that the SVP did not only respond to public opinion it also influenced it through aggressive and professionally set communication campaigns. The goal is not to demonstrate that the SVP created public opinion, but to test if the party policies were driven by it. Furthermore, the SVP hardened its position on immigration as a response to growing economic concerns over immigration, including global financial crisis, anxieties about EU and the decrease of Swiss sovereignty to the EU and, finally, unease with the integration of Muslims to the Swiss society.

#### **5.1.2 Plan of the Chapter**

The chapter is laid out as follows. First, it proceeds with a brief discussion of the historical context of immigration to Switzerland after the Second World War and the dependence

of the Swiss economy on the foreign labour. Then, it considers Swiss-EU relations and highlights the cornerstones in their development, as Euroscepticism has been a dominant feature of the SVP. It then considers the idiosyncratic features of the Swiss political system. It also examines SVP's manifestos for 2007, 2011 and 2015 federal elections. The third section explores causal factors that led the SVP to pursue their restrictive stance on immigration. The fourth section sheds light on the mechanisms and provides an explanation of the process of policy change. It also revisits the original hypotheses and draws a complete causal chain of Swiss immigration policy change between 2003 and 2015. The chapter concludes by pointing to importance of exogenous factors for providing an insight to the SVP's restrictive immigration stance and subsequent policy change, pointing to the intersection between economic anxieties and identity concerns as drivers of change. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of the party's agency in triggering a direct democracy mechanism, which accounted for major policy change.

## **5.2 Setting out the context**

In recent decades immigration-policy making in Switzerland has been restrictive, both regarding immigration and integration (Manatschal, 2015: 23). However, this has not always been the case and there were times when Switzerland sought foreigners, needed as a labour force. Immigration has been a crucial issue for Switzerland since the end of the Second World War, when the country was in need of foreign labour during the economic recovery (D'Amato, 2014: 310) and later, during the economic boom in 1950s (Piguet, 2013: 15). However, large arrivals of labour immigrants, which increased from six per cent to 17 in the period following the Second World War and just before the arrival of the 1970s oil crisis (Piguet, 2013: 23), started to pose concerns for radical right parties in Switzerland. The Movement against 'Over-foreignisation', which consisted of radical right populist Swiss populist parties, wanted to restrict increased migration into Switzerland (Skenderovic, 2009: 57). The culmination of this Movement's activities was the Schwarzenbach Initiative that was voted in 1970 and 'aimed at reduction of the

immigrant share from the 17 per cent to 10 per cent' (Manatschal 2015: 24). Even though this Initiative was rejected by the population, it was done so only by a small margin, with fifty-five per cent of population voting against (Riaño and Wastl-Walter, 2006: 1701). This demonstrated that anti-immigrant attitudes were quite strong with almost the majority of the population voting in favour of restricting immigration. Furthermore, the oil crisis of the 1970s only added to this, by creating an economic downturn, which led to the outflow of economic migrants from Switzerland, keeping the unemployment rate low as Switzerland at that time did not have mandatory unemployment insurance (Afonso, 2005: 654). In the beginning of the nineties, unemployment became a problem for Switzerland as unskilled guest workers faced challenges in finding a job (D'Amato, 2014: 311). During the nineties the SVP, whose rhetoric was becoming increasingly anti-immigration, started to emerge as a serious contender, becoming a national party and doubling its support in the 2003 federal elections (Buhlmann et al., 2006: 3; Kriesi et al., 2005).

Since 2003, when the SVP managed to score the highest number of seats in the Swiss federal elections and to achieve the 'magic formula' of Swiss government by taking an additional seat (Burgos et al., 2011), it has become one of the crucial parties in Switzerland. Furthermore, it managed to substantially influence the development of the Swiss immigration policy as immigration has been a central theme of its agenda. As Ruedin and D'Amato (2015: 10) put it: 'the debate on immigration and integration in Switzerland cannot be separated from the electoral success of the Swiss People's Party (SVP)'. SVP remains a key player on Swiss policy-making arena, especially with regards to immigration. A lot of the research on the SVP has been done on the demand side of the Swiss conservatism, focusing on SVP's electoral rise and its support (Albertazzi and McD McDonnell 2015; Gottraux and Pechu, 2011; Gottraux and Pechu, 2016; Sciarini et al., 2014; Skenderovic, 2009; Mazzoleni et al., 2007; Mazzoleni, 2008; Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007). Furthermore, immigration policy-making in Switzerland has been extensively studied (Ackermann and Freitag, 2015; Afonso, 2005; Afonso, 2007; Afonso, 2014; Fischer et al., 2002; Manatschal, 2015). This study combines immigration policy-



making and the role of the SVP in it by shedding the light on the logic of immigration policy change in Switzerland.

### **5.2.1 Swiss-EU relations**

The Immigration debate in Switzerland is largely based around the country's relationship with the EU, focusing on the bilateral agreements and, particularly the free movement of people. Furthermore, examining Switzerland's relationship with the EU is important in understanding the SVP's Eurosceptic character and subsequent approach to immigration. As the 2014 Initiative Against Mass Migration demonstrated, a substantial part of the relationship between Switzerland and the EU is indeed about the free movement of people. Having close ties with the EU, but not being a member of it has both benefits and disadvantages. Not being part of the EU comes for Switzerland as a detriment of the participation in the EU decision-making (Lavenex and Schwok, 2015: 36). Skipping a series of phases of stagnation and multilateral failures, Switzerland and the EU eventually came to enhanced unilateral and bilateral integration between 1993 and 2004 (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008: 172-180), which produced a series of important bilateral agreements, including Switzerland's accession to the free movement of people.

This enhanced cooperation started after the failure of the Swiss to support joining the European Economic Area (EEA). The Swiss have always been reluctant about relations with EU and when the question of joining the EEA came on the agenda in 1992, the population rejected it "at the polls by a thin majority (50.3 per cent) of the voters and a comfortable cantonal majority (eighteen of twenty-six cantons)" (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008: 177). The rejection of EEA agreement in 1992 resulted in continuing talks between Switzerland and the EU to avoid "economic discrimination and political isolation" (Dupont and Sciarini, 2007: 202). As a result of the discussions, seven agreements were signed in 1999, called the Bilateral Agreement I, which contained the agreement on the introduction of the free movement of people with the EU and opened to Switzerland access to the EU single market (Schwok and Najy, 2016: 127). A year later the

Agreement was supported by the large majority of the population, with sixty-eight per cent voting in favour of it (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, 2013: 5). This opened the Swiss labour market first to the members the EU-15 and, then, to other members which joined the EU during subsequent enlargements (Afonso, 2010: 64). The Swiss population approved the extension of free movement of people to new Eastern member states in 2007 (Department of Foreign Affairs, 2013: 5). With Bulgaria and Romania joining the EU in 2007, Switzerland signed Protocol II in 2008 regarding the extension of the free movement of people to Romania and Bulgaria, which was also supported by the population (State secretariat for migration, 2017). However, as the result of the Initiative Against Mass Migration demonstrated, the attitude of the Swiss towards the free movement of people changed in a negative direction and became a major issue on the national political agenda. As Koch and Lavenex, 2007: 148) underline: “[t]he opening of Swiss borders to the free movement of persons from the European Union has often been and, with EU enlargement, is once again, probably, the most contentious issue in Switzerland’s relationship with the Union”.

Switzerland’s prospects of joining the EU remain very slim, as there is major opposition from the public. Even though, every single time the Swiss supported the extension of free movement of people to the EU new member states, the question of joining the EU was never favoured by the Swiss (Schwok, 2010: 9). The acceptance of 2014 Initiative Against Mass Migration highlighted the anxieties about uncontrolled EU migration. In 2015 the polls indicated that about half of Swiss voters are opposed to any further EU integration or the prospect of Switzerland joining the EU (Ackerman and Freitag, 2015: 42) because they want to keep their sovereignty (Ackerman and Freitag, 2015: 36). Signing bilateral agreements was a compromise in the development of the relationship between Switzerland and the EU, which aimed to enhance economic cooperation between the two (Koch and Lavenex, 2007: 161).

The acceptance of the Initiative Against Mass Migration in February 2014 has endangered Swiss-EU relations. The relationship has become problematic as the Initiative aimed to restrict the principle of free movement of people, which is incompatible with the Bilateral Agreement I because of the so-called 'guillotine clause', which states that if one of the agreements is cancelled, it automatically leads to suspension of others (Schwok and Najy, 2016: 128). Approaching the deadline for the implementation of the Initiative the Swiss parliament, in December 2016, voted to approve the amendment to the constitution, giving national priority to the Swiss in the process of employment and not imposing any quotas on EU immigration (Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations, 2017). New provisions to the legislation will give priority to Swiss job seekers and those people, including foreigners, who are registered at the Swiss unemployment office (l'Assemblée Fédérale, 2016). The European Commission was pleased that no quotas have been introduced, but still aims to see how the new law is going to be implemented (Maurisse, 2016). The SVP has been disappointed with this decision, claiming that parliament has not respected the will of the people. Some party national councillors expressed a view that there is a likelihood that the popular initiative will be launched to abandon the article on the free movement of persons, which will not come directly from the party, but from one of its satellites like AUNS (Campaign for Independent and Neutral Switzerland) (Nidegger, 2016). In February 2017 two party branches (Valais and Neuchâtel) launched cantonal initiatives that aim to prioritise giving work to Swiss nationals and foreigners residing in these cantons (UDC Neuchâtel, 2017; UDC Valais, 2017), which highlights the importance of direct democracy in Swiss policy-making.

### ***5.2.3 Idiosyncrasies of the Swiss political system***

Switzerland represents a special case because, unlike in other European countries, "policy-making in the Swiss parliament does not happen through stable coalitions where the same parties negotiate among themselves prior to any political debate. Parties form changing majorities on an issue by issue basis" (Lutz, 2012: 689). The nature of Swiss consensus democracy requires major parties to come to an agreement during the policy-making process. Policy-making does not happen only through parliamentary means, but

also through the direct democratic route. Direct democracy serves as a tool for people and parties to set the agenda by launching initiatives, their attempts to influence the policy-making process. Therefore, political parties have an opportunity to resort to direct democracy if they are able to collect 100,000 signatures to launch a federal initiative or 50,000 to launch an optional referendum (Papadopoulos, 1997). This provides parties with a tool to express their concerns if they feel that their position is not taken into account – even if they are a member of the government (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007: 98). The Swiss system of consensus democracy allows the SVP to “claim that its preferences are ignored by other parties even if they participate in government, and regularly uses the tools of direct democracy (initiatives and referendums) to challenge government decisions” (Afonso, 2013: 25). Furthermore, the importance of direct democracy to immigration policy making is based on the fact that “every legal change in the domain of immigration or integration policy is subject to the approval of all significant political groups” (Afonso, 2005: 656). It is important to stress that the necessity of cross-party agreement does not only refer to immigration, but applies to any other policy domain. SVP has been using direct democracy to push for more restrictive immigration policies, but also to oppose closer cooperation between Switzerland and the EU. As Albertazzi and McDonnell (2015: 121) highlight: “direct democracy played a major role in the SVP’s attempts to oppose the federal government on EU-related issues in recent decades”. Not only has direct democracy allowed the SVP to pursue their immigration stance, but “made it possible for the national SVP to play the role of an opposition party and undermine the consensual rules of Swiss governance” (Skenderovic, 2009: 135). Below the chapter discusses how these two distinct features of consensual and direct democracy affected the evolution of Swiss immigration policy. The importance of direct democracy in Swiss policy-making cannot be disregarded, therefore the chapter also examines the referendums and the initiatives pertinent to immigration and the EU between 2003 and 2015.

### **5.3 SVP's immigration stance**

#### **5.3.1 Manifestos**

SVP's rhetoric has been more or less consistent since 1980s and was concentrated primarily around the protection of Switzerland from immigrants, in particular Muslims, criminals, and from international influence, primarily from the EU and its institutions (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015: 117). Since its electoral rise in 1991, the party has been able to redefine the immigration debate and bring this issue to the top of the national agenda. Thus, the SVP's first major victory came in 1992, when the EEA Treaty was rejected by the Swiss people in a nation-wide referendum, despite the majority of the political elite accepting the Treaty (Linder, 2013: 191). The party "has supported the isolation of the country with respect to European integration, the defence of Switzerland's key institutions (neutrality, direct democracy, and federalism) and the tightening of the country's immigration and asylum policy" (Varone et al., 2014: 108). In Switzerland immigration is central to its political economy as the country is dependent on the foreign labour and hence, immigration policy has been a salient issue on the national agenda with the SVP being able to influence its development substantially (Afonso, 2013: 24). Furthermore, the party was also able to capitalise on anxieties around national identity (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008: 95). Even though the party's manifestos have not changed much between 2003 and 2015, the SVP's discourse showed signs of radicalisation primarily throughout the visual advertisement campaigns, including infamous ad on which white sheep kicking out a black sheep, which was prepared for the Initiative for expelling criminal foreigners. The other prominent example of hardening of SVP's rhetoric referred to the Initiative against the construction of minarets, with a poster showing a woman in full veil behind the Swiss flag, covered by minarets. This kind of visual advertisement has proved to be a successful tactic in convincing the public to support the SVP's initiatives.

The electoral rise of the SVP has had a profound impact on the Swiss party system as since 1991 the rise of the party has been steady, with the SVP becoming the most

popular party in Switzerland in 2003, primarily on an anti-immigrant and anti-EU platform (Skenderovic, 2009). The party more than doubled their seats in the National Council, rising from twenty-five seats in 1991 to fifty-four in 2011 (Afonso, 2013: 24). The 2015 federal election showed that the party only reinforced its electoral success, gaining sixty-five seats in the National Council and beating its own record of 2007 (Bernhard, 2016: 882). The chapter does not delve into the discussion of SVP's electoral success, but demonstrates that since gaining major electoral support in 2003, the party has been able to exert influence on Swiss immigration policy-making not only through the tools of direct democracy, but also, partially, through the parliamentary route.

The importance of showing the electoral success of the party is also pertinent to the redefinition of the Swiss political system, which allowed the SVP to have an impact on immigration policy-making through governmental channels. Hence, the 2003 election result altered the so-called 'magic formula' of Swiss government, an agreement between four major political parties that fixed the allocation of seats in the federal government and which remained unchanged for more than forty years (Burgos et al., 2011). The 'magic formula' allocated only one seat for the SVP in the seven-member Swiss government, but with the SVP becoming the largest party in 2003, it gained a second seat in the Federal Council, with the election of SVP's leader Christoph Blocher (Meuwly, 2010: 133). Changing of the 'magic formula' and Blocher's role as a chief of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) allowed the SVP to influence the direction of immigration policy-making and bring immigration to the forefront of the governmental agenda. However, after Christoph Blocher failed to get reelected to Swiss government in 2007, the party became confrontational (Bernhard, 2016: 879), which changed the direction of party's efforts, with the SVP concentrating on direct democratic methods of changing Swiss immigration policy. Before proceeding with the examination of the initiatives and referendums launched by the SVP, the chapter depicts the SVP's positions on immigration and the EU as the development of immigration policy is underpinned by the influence of European integration. It examines electoral pledges on

immigration, derived from SVP's manifestos before 2007, 2011 and 2015 federal elections.

*Immigration policy in 2007 Federal election manifesto*

The 2007 electoral programme concentrated on tackling family migration, integration and opposition to the EU. The SVP criticised family migration, by claiming that this route represents half of the immigration inflow and does not bring economic benefits. The question of integration and national identity appeared in the manifesto with SVP reinstating the importance of immigrant's integration and their respect of Swiss traditional values and laws. Although, never mentioned explicitly, anti-Islam sentiment constituted a substantial part of SVP's rhetoric on national identity, picturing two women in headscarves with the title under the picture "Are we the foreigners in our own country?" (SVP, 2007: 44). On the EU question, the party attributed Switzerland's success of choosing the bilateral route with the EU to itself and demanded the withdrawal of Swiss application to join the EU (SVP, 2007: 17). The major opposition to the EU was directed against the loss of sovereignty as, according to the party, the EU is a super state, forcing political union on its members and imposing foreign policy, security and common currency, which Switzerland should not agree to (SVP, 2007: 17). The problems that Switzerland faces should be resolved with its own legislation, not the one imposed by the EU (SVP, 2007: 18).

*2011 Federal election manifesto*

The previously discussed free movement of people appeared in the SVP's manifesto for the first time in 2011. The SVP argued for a renegotiation of the principle stressing that people "were promised that the benefits would outweigh the disadvantages, and that quotas could be imposed as a safety valve if things got out of hand. We were also assured that freedom of movement would be limited to those who had jobs or were capable of supporting themselves" (SVP, 2011: 54). Thus, the dissatisfaction with the free movement of people was linked to social security concerns, with the party arguing that unemployed EU migrants are attracted by Switzerland's social security provision

(SVP, 2011: 54). The rhetoric of blaming immigrants for high unemployment rates, particularly in border regions, was also present in the manifesto (SVP, 2011: 54-55). The party also linked immigration to the discourse of law and order, by reinstating its position on the Initiative on expelling criminal foreigners and its strict implementation (SVP, 2011: 56). Finally, national identity anxieties were also part of the party's agenda that wanted the Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets to be fully respected, emphasising the supremacy of the "Swiss law and traditions" (SVP, 2011: 56). The SVP's rhetoric on the EU remained exactly the same as it was before the 2007 federal election: the primary demand was to withdraw the EU accession application because from the SVP's point of view, EU posed a threat to Switzerland's direct democracy (SVP, 2011: 37). Strong opposition to the EU came also from the necessity to co-exist with EU law and EU institutions (SVP, 2011: 37).

#### *2015 Federal election manifesto*

The exact same phrase opens the 2015 electoral pledge on immigration as it was in 2011: "Excessive immigration is detrimental to Switzerland because it has an impact infrastructure, unemployment rates, wage pressure and welfare budget" (SVP, 2015: 31). The party criticised the government's integration policies that use taxpayer's money on immigrants' integration, which should be the responsibility of the migrant, according to the SVP, not the responsibility of the state (SVP, 2015: 33). After the successful 9th of February 2014 vote, the party stressed the importance of the implementation of the Initiative against mass migration, that aimed to ensure the introduction of annual quotas on EU immigration and the implementation of the national preference for Swiss nationals during the employment process (SVP, 2015: 33). Immigration became linked to welfare discourse through family migration with the SVP claiming that immigrants have access to too many benefits.

The SVP maintained its hardcore Eurosceptic position, demanding to suspend the free movement of people, by introducing annual quotas and ensuring the supremacy of Swiss law over the EU law. The programme stated that the agreement on the free movement



of people should be renegotiated and that in case of failure to do so, the agreement should be suspended (SVP, 2015: 34). The SVP threatened to launch a new initiative if Swiss government and parliament refuse to apply the new constitutional provision on immigration quotas (SVP, 2015: 34). The party's main criticism was on the necessity for Swiss law to adhere to EU law, more precisely the opposition to the adherence to the European law on the Swiss territory by opposing the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on disputes between Switzerland and the EU. According to the SVP Switzerland's independence was being threatened by Brussels (SVP, 2015: 12-13).

Between 2003 and 2015 the main change in the SVP's immigration rhetoric comes with the opposition to the free movement of people in 2011, when it appears in the manifesto. However, it should be said that immigration has been rising sharply since 2007 global crisis unfolded. Net migration constituted 83, 000 in 2007, rising from almost 50,000 in 2006 and reaching its highest ever level in 2008 of 103,000 net migration (Office Fédérale de la Statistique, 2016). This created concerns for the SVP as the party argued that such a high number of immigration could not be absorbed without having a negative impact on the system. In the SVP's discourse, immigration has been linked to law and order and to the discourse on social security. Concerns over welfare were linked to family migration routes and to intra-EU immigration. The question of integration was also a prominent issue on the SVP's agenda, primarily dominated by anti-Islam sentiments.

Their Eurosceptic stance remained the same: there has been consistent opposition from the party towards the EU over the years as the SVP viewed it as a threat to Swiss national interests and legislation.

### 5.3.2 Policy change

Since its electoral rise in 1991, the SVP has been using direct democracy as a tool to

Table 3: SVP's Manifesto pledges, 2007-2015.

2007 Manifesto	2011 Manifesto	2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tackle family migration;</li> <li>• enhance integration;</li> <li>• withdraw EU accession application;</li> <li>• importance of national identity;</li> <li>• anti-Islamic sentiment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• renegotiate the free movement of people;</li> <li>• limit the free movement of people only to those immigrants that have a job offer;</li> <li>• withdraw EU accession application;</li> <li>• linking the free movement of people to social security anxieties;</li> <li>• law and order: reinstating the position on expelling criminal foreigners;</li> <li>• tougher integration requirements, focusing on Muslims.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• integration is a matter of individual, not of the state, reduce state expenditure on integration;</li> <li>• implement the Initiative Against Mass Migration by introducing national preference on the labour market;</li> <li>• withdraw EU accession application;</li> <li>• suspension of the free movement of people;</li> <li>• ensure the supremacy of the Swiss law over the EU law;</li> <li>• limit immigrants' access to benefits;</li> </ul>

pursue more restrictive immigration policies and to oppose Switzerland's integration into the EU with its first major success in 1992, when the EEA Treaty was rejected. Despite

being the most popular party in Switzerland since 2003, the SVP presented itself as an anti-governmental party and launched numerous initiatives, which increased immigration salience over the years and by launching optional referendums, which acted as veto instruments for governmental decisions on immigration and EU matters. Often unable to persuade other parties and get their support in parliament, the SVP aimed to influence immigration-policy making through extra-parliamentary channels. Thus, the SVP increased immigration salience and contributed to policy changes by winning some popular initiatives. This part of the chapter provides a brief examination of the initiatives and referendums pertinent to immigration and the relationship between Switzerland and the EU. Furthermore, it gives an overview of the changes to the Aliens law (*Loi sur les étrangers*). Finally, it also depicts the Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets, launched by the SVP that touches upon integration matters, particularly integration of Muslims into the Swiss society.

#### *Referendum on Schengen/Dublin Agreement*

In May 2005, Swiss people were faced with a mandatory referendum on the Schengen and Dublin Agreements, to which SVP alongside AUNS prepared a counter-proposal, viewing it as a threat of further integration with the EU (Milic, 2006: 1277). The SVP was defeated as the people supported the Agreements by following the recommendation of the government (Département Fédéral des Affaires Etrangères, 2014). This failure was shortly followed by another, when the party supported Swiss Democrats' proposal to deny the extension of free movement of people to citizens of Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015: 195). Unsuccessful in influencing enhanced cooperation between Switzerland and the EU, the party was able to make some gains on the parliamentary arena by changing the Aliens law in 2005, when parliament accepted the proposals of the FDJP to introduce more restrictive rules for family reunification, and to tighten integration practices by requiring to possess sufficient knowledge of the local language as a confirmation of successful integration (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015: 196).

#### *Referendum on modifications to the Aliens law*

In September 2006 the Swiss largely approved the modifications to the Aliens law with sixty-eight per cent of the population voting in favour of it (Secrétariat de l'Etat aux Migrations, 2007). Major amendments to the Aliens law included the introduction of more restrictive rules for non-EU immigrants, including conditions of admission to the country and integration process (Secrétariat de l'Etat aux Migrations, 2007). The new law made the admission of non-EU workers to the Swiss labour market harder, by requiring evidence of the impossibility of hiring a Swiss or an EU worker instead, that is employers had to give priority to Swiss or EU candidates over non-EU candidates. (Secrétariat de l'Etat aux Migrations, 2007). The law introduced a requirement for non-EU workers to evidence sufficient financial means to stay in Switzerland (Pauchard, 2006). The law also introduced the issuance of the residence permit based on the integration success, primarily the knowledge of the local language and also envisaged an evocation of a permit in cases of long-term prison sentence and dependence on social assistance for prolonged periods of time (Pauchard, 2006).

#### *The Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets*

The Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets, which was not a party initiative, but came from certain members of the party, namely social conservatives Walter Wobbmänn and Ulrich Schlüer, was designed to prohibit the construction of minarets on Swiss soil. This initiative was not only about anti-immigrant sentiment, but was primarily directed towards the spread of Islam as a threat to Switzerland (Mayer, 2011: 11). Even though the initiative was only supported by the SVP and by Christian Federal Democratic Union (UDF) party and rejected by all other parties, on 29th of November 2009 Swiss voters accepted the Initiative by saying a firm 'yes' with a substantial majority of fifty-seven per cent in favour (Hirter and Vatter, 2009).

#### *The Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners*

The initiative, launched by the SVP, was an example of the 'law and order' discourse that has been central to the party's platform. It called for the automatic expulsion of non-Swiss offenders, who committed different types of crimes, including social security fraud,

who independent of seriousness of the crime should be stripped of residence and should be banned from entering Switzerland (SVP, 2010). The initiative was accepted by fifty-three per cent of voters and the majority of the cantons on the 28th of November 2010 (Chancellerie fédérale, 2009). The Federal Council and the Parliament rejected the Initiative and came up with a counter project, which aimed to unify the practice of stripping a foreigner, who had committed a serious crime, from entitlement to a residence permit. According to the counter-project, the right to reside in Switzerland was to be based on the seriousness of the crime, but not predetermined in the catalogue of crimes (Conseil fédéral, 2010). The SVP, who wanted deportation to be automatic, criticised the government's counter-project because it contained the so-called 'hardship clause' that enabled judges to intervene in the case if the deportation is a threat to a person.

#### *The Initiative Against Mass Migration*

This initiative did not only concern immigration *per se*, but also undermined Switzerland's relationship with the EU. The SVP launched a petition in support of the Initiative in 2011 with the vote taking place on the 9th of February 2014. The only party that supported the SVP's Initiative, was the Ticino League, a regional party from Italian speaking canton Ticino. The core issues of the initiative included: to decide who is coming to the country and for how long; to limit immigration and to impose the introduction of quotas on all kind of foreigners coming to Switzerland including cross-border workers and asylum seekers; to give priority to Swiss nationals when hiring for a job; and finally, to restrict foreigners' access to social benefits (SVP, 2013). Both government and parliament firmly rejected the initiative (Bettinelli, 2014), but it was nevertheless accepted by a tiny majority of the population, with 50.3 per cent voting in favour and accepted by a majority of the cantons (Chancelliere fédérale, 2014). As Ackerman and Freitag (2015: 36) underline: "This voting outcome has triggered wide-ranging debates about both the policy on immigrants as well as the future of Switzerland within the European context". In December 2016, the Swiss parliament implemented the Initiative not by imposing quotas on EU immigration, but instead introducing a preference for Swiss workers during the process of job hiring (Sécretariat d'Etat aux Migrations, 2017).

#### *The Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners (Implementation)*

This initiative was the SVP's response to the existence of the 'hardship clause', which gave the judge the leverage to decide not to expel a foreigner that committed a crime in certain cases (Stephens, 2016). As the party was not satisfied with how the parliament proceeded with the implementation of the original initiative voted in 2010, the new Initiative was launched. The initiative was rejected by both majority of people and by a majority of cantons to automatically deport foreigners, who committed certain crimes (Chancellerie fédérale, 2016).

With their electoral rise, the SVP were able to increase the salience of immigration and Euroscepticism. In the period between 2007 and 2015, the party's discourse on immigration and the EU remained by and large consistent with a tough stance on both issues. As the SVP mostly disagreed with the other political parties on these matters, parliamentary ways of influencing immigration policy-making mostly have not proved to be effective. Despite being the most popular party in Switzerland since 2003, the SVP was not able to pursue its restrictive immigration stance through parliamentary channels due to the lack of agreement between political parties. Failure to do so resulted in numerous initiatives and referendums launched by the party in order to help achieve its electoral pledges and defend its ideological positions. This tactic proved to be successful and resulted in certain important policy changes on immigration, the EU and integration matters. Now the chapter proceeds with the exploration of causal factors that underpinned the SVP's logic on immigration between 2003 and 2015.

#### **5.4 Causal factors**

The analysis of the interviews found that a variety of factors underpinned the change in the Swiss immigration policy. First, the SVP took public opinion into account when deciding on certain aspects of immigration policies, while it did not follow public opinion on the issue of Euroscepticism and closer cooperation between Switzerland and the EU.

The importance of public opinion varied depending on the nature of the issue in question. Second, anxieties about the EU, namely the lack of control over EU migration and the necessity of the cohesion between Swiss law and the EU law led to the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies. Furthermore, the research has found that the global financial crisis *per se* was not the underlying cause, leading the SVP to adopt a tougher immigration stance, rather its combination with the free movement of people produced economic concerns about labour market anxieties, which led to the more radical approach to immigration. In the SVP's rhetoric, immigration was reframed through the social welfare lens and was linked primarily to the EU migration, but not exclusively. Finally, integration policies have been substantially tightened with the use of direct democracy by the SVP because of identity anxieties about integration of Muslims and fear of Islam.

#### **5.4.1 Public opinion**

Public opinion was an important factor for the SVP in their pursuit of tougher immigration policies, however it was also used by the SVP in their populist rhetoric. The Eurosceptic stance of the SVP has been consistent between 2003 and 2015, but this has not always reflected the public opinion on the issue. Despite being unsuccessful in preventing the Europeanisation of Swiss immigration policy, the SVP continued to pursue its Eurosceptic stance. However, the success came in 2014, when the SVP claimed a significant victory regarding EU migration, when the Initiative Against Mass Migration was accepted by the Swiss electorate. Public hostility to immigration, brought by the effect of free movement of people combined with the Eurosceptic rhetoric of the party was a major driving force for the Initiative. The effects of the free movement of people shifted public opinion on immigration and the majority of people wanted immigration reduced (Ackermann and Freitag, 2015: 37).

The effects of freedom of movement. We only saw the real effects later and then we saw a pressure on jobs and then when the public opinion began to shift, giving us solutions. (Interview with a co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Jérôme Desmeules, 2016).

Since the Agreement of the free movement of people between Switzerland and the EU came into force in 2002, immigration was increasing every year (Office fédérale de la statistique, 2016), which created an opportunity for the SVP to take use this in their Eurosceptic discourse. The sharp increase in immigration after the 2007 Global financial crisis, which almost doubled since the introduction of the free movement (Office fédérale de la statistique, 2016), triggered the SVP to launch the Initiative Against Mass Migration, which would be both anti-EU and anti-immigration. Direct democracy allowed the party to present itself as an opposition to the political elite, despite being the largest party in the National Council. By using the instruments of direct democracy, the party aimed to highlight the hostility of public opinion to the government and present itself as a defender of public opinion, which was not always supportive of the SVP's position on immigration and Europe, though, as the results of referendums demonstrate.

Direct democracy makes it more difficult as the politics that the government wants come directly in opposition to the politics that people want. This is a big problem for us because normally there is an agreement between the popular will and the government. But in the last twenty years the government by and large wants to adhere to the European Union. Swiss do not want this. There is a divergence and this makes it more difficult because the will of the government is curbed by the popular will (Interview with the secretary general of the Vaud cantonal branch, Kevin Grangier, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

Direct democracy allowed the SVP to engineer public opinion by highlighting its commitment to defend the interests of 'the working man' against the elite, which is typical of populist parties (Nordensvard and Ketola, 2014: 362). However, despite high prices on rent, the argument that SVP makes is populist and does not make much sense because when the party attacks cross-border commuters from France and other bordering countries in their anti-immigration discourse, border commuters do not have an impact on the rent prices as they do go back to their countries every day.

Yes, yes, and you see if you live in Geneva. You go there with your car, you see French plates everywhere. For the working man - what does he see? That his rent is increasing, his salary is decreasing, it takes a long time to go to work. (Interview with a co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Jérôme Desmeules, 2016).

Unlike in other countries, mechanisms of direct democracy equip political parties and various groups to have discussions on policy issues. This serves two purposes: first, it



lets the party understand public opinion on the issue, which was also massively engineered by the SVP since its electoral rise in 2003. But, at the same time it gives the party a platform to popularise its positions across the electorate, trying to convince the public on accepting their position on the issue.

It was obvious in the discussion we had, it was very engaged discussion. Not in parliament, before we had to vote, you see - a lot of meetings everywhere in Switzerland you could feel how people thought about the problem and it was both the political situation and the economic situation, it was the cultural situation. People, you see 80, 000 people is a city like Luzern or St. Gallen. For Switzerland, these are rather big cities, not like New York or London, but for Switzerland it is a lot. And people thought it is too much (Interview with a former national councillor and initiator of the anti-minaret movement within the SVP, Ulrich Schlüer, 2016).

This is not to say that these discussions served as a definitive answer to the attitudes of the whole population, but it gave the party the opportunity to voice their concerns and to discover public perceptions of the issue and to persuade the public to vote in a particular way. Thus, the effects of the free movement of people were the reason given by the SVP for launching the collection of signatures for the Initiative Against Mass Migration in 2011 (Interview with the vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016; Interview with a former national councillor, Ulrich Schlüer, 2016; Interview with a national councillor and former vice-president of the SVP, Luzi Stämli, 2016). It was a continuation of the ideological commitment of the party to reduce immigration and prevent further Europeanisation of Switzerland, but it was also supported by the shift in public opinion towards the free movement of people. The immigration issue cannot be examined without reference to European Union, as free movement of people with the EU frames Swiss immigration debate to a great extent. Thus, Euroscepticism represents another angle through which the party defends the public. The SVP has continuously stressed the importance of defending the interests of the Swiss people and maintaining Swiss sovereignty in its opposition to the EU.

And I think that what really prevent politics to go straight to... or orient itself too much on Brussels, and it is always again brought back by the population, when the population says, no, we have a different view, we do not want to become a part of this big thing. The skepticism by the average citizen is higher towards European Union, towards Euroscepticism than it is by the average politician here in Bern. (Interview with a co-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016)

The Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners (implementation), which was voted in February 2016 illustrated that public opinion was also important for logic of immigration policy-making of the SVP. Hence, after the Initiative was rejected by the people, the SVP indicated that they will not pursue changes to the law by launching another initiative, but the party will pursue the attempts to change the law within the parliamentary arena (Interview with Geneva's municipal councillor, Eric Bertinat, 2016). Rejecting the idea of launching another initiative demonstrates that public attitudes remain a salient factor in SVP's immigration decision-making.

Public opinion was important for the party in toughening its position on the issue, but it was not decisive. The importance of public attitudes varies when it comes to different aspects of immigration policy. Thus, the party has always maintained its strong Eurosceptic position despite its failures to convince the public of its anti-EU stance for a long time. The SVP has always been too extreme on immigration, compared to other parties, maintaining its hardline rhetoric. Thus, the SVP's attempts to change immigration policy through the direct democratic route has not always found public support. The party has had a consistent view on immigration and the EU, despite its several defeats on these issues on the direct democratic arena. However, the decision of the party to launch the 2014 Initiative Against Mass Migration was driven by the shift in public opinion towards EU migration. Furthermore, the importance of public opinion is highlighted by the rejection of the 2016 Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners (implementation), when the party respected the result of the vote and decided not to pursue further endeavours to push for this legislation. The SVP's attempts to change immigration policy were more a result of the ideological and populist nature of the party to represent itself as a defender of the people against the decisions taken by the elite. Direct democracy provided the party with an institutional opportunity not only to understand the attitudes of the public on immigration, but also served as a tool to popularise the party's positions.

#### ***5.4.2 Enhanced Europeanisation of the Swiss immigration policy***

The SVP has always been a hard line Eurosceptic party, opposing closer ties with the EU, which has been at the heart of its political programme. The party had its first major success in 1992, when the EEA treaty was rejected by the Swiss voters. Continuously, the SVP argued against the free movement of people and the extension of this principle to the new EU member states. Despite transitional agreements on the free movement of people with the new EU member states, the SVP continued to resist this enhanced integration between Switzerland and the EU, trying to block the extension of free movement of people to EU newest members. EU enlargements created fertile ground for the SVP to pursue its Eurosceptic position. Switzerland's participation in the free movement of people with the EU presented an opportunity for the party to reinforce and to combine its anti-immigration and anti-EU discourse.

We started collecting the signatures because of the effects of the free movement of people because Bern has lied to us again. Suddenly we were forced to accept 40, 000 people per year (Interview with Geneva's municipal councillor, Eric Bertinat, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

Eventually, the SVP's attempts to resist the Europeanisation of the Swiss immigration policy led to the launch of the Initiative Against Mass Migration. This was only possible through the direct democratic route, as the party faced institutional constraints by not having a consensus with the other parties, who were in favour of the free movement of people. With the adherence to the free movement of people, Switzerland abolished its strict quota system of work permits. Since the Agreement on free movement of people came into force in 2002 (State Secretariat for Migration, 2017), net migration figures have slightly increased. If before the introduction of the agreement, in 2001 net migration was approximately at the level of 43,000 people, by the end of 2002 it was roughly around 51,500 immigrants, remaining around that level until the arrival of the global financial crisis in 2007, when the numbers rose sharply to 83,000 people (Office fédérale de la statistique, 2016). The abolishment of quotas and the impossibility of controlling immigration was the main trigger for the SVP in launching the Initiative.

You know, I think that's the main reason is the growth of immigration. I think before the free movement we had a strong limitation for immigration and till this time

immigration was more or less under control and with the introduction of free circulation of people, immigration was growing extremely (Interview with a national councillor, Heinz Brand, 2016).

From the SVP's point of view, uncontrolled immigration from the EU to Switzerland presented labour market concerns, which were linked to the higher competition on the labour market and to the ability of the economy to provide enough jobs for newcomers. The party kept arguing that free movement of people brought imported unemployment, which was detrimental to the Swiss economy (Interview with a national councillor, Alice Glauser, 2016). While in the past, Switzerland was able to export unemployment by having 'strict annual quotas' on both regular workers and seasonal workers (Skenderovic, 2007: 162), the introduction of the free movement of people ended that. The absence of limits on EU migration posed constraints on the numbers of highly skilled non-EU migrants. This reinforced the SVP's discourse on the free movement of people that allows for the inflow of unqualified labour force from the EU, while highly skilled non-EU migrants face a quota system for coming to Switzerland (Interview with the vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016). The SVP linked free movement of people to the unemployment discourse, arguing that low skilled intra-EU migration imports unemployment to Switzerland and prevents the hiring of the highly qualified third country nationals.

The SVP's Eurosceptic discourse manifested itself through a loss of sovereignty, which included the free movement of people and the necessity of cohesion between Swiss law and the EU legal framework.

We don't decide anymore ourselves, somebody else decides, be it the US, UN, the EU, be it the huge companies like Google or Apple, or whatever. So, what we feel - that we loose sovereignty, we loose the possibility to control our lives, and we want back that control. The whole idea of the nation state is that we decide what is happening. And in the meantime is not any longer true. (Interview with the head of the Federal Commission on Migration, Walter Leimgruber, 2016).

EU enlargements and subsequent extensions of the free movement of people created an opportunity for the SVP to reinforce its Eurosceptic stance. The lack of sovereignty,

which manifested itself in the lack of control over EU migration and the necessity of cohesion between Swiss law and the EU law presented an opportunity for the party to reinforce the welfare anxieties around EU migration. According to the SVP, free movement of people was detrimental to Switzerland as it allowed EU citizens to come to Switzerland to claim welfare benefits. Thus, in the party's view enhanced integration with the EU was one of the causes behind the SVP's logic on immigration policy change.

Partial loss of sovereignty to the EU, which manifested itself in the lack of control over EU migration and in the cohesion between Swiss law and EU law in the area of the free movement of people. The SVP constructed its position on the EU not simply through a political lens, but also through a legal one. As previously mentioned, the relationship between Switzerland and the EU is developed through a set of Bilateral agreements, with the second set of Bilaterals bound by a guillotine clause, which means that if the EU or Switzerland cancel one of the seven agreements, the other ones will automatically be terminated (Sciarini et al., 2015: 272).

European Union says if we cancel certain things, we cancel everything. This I understand. Today there is a decision of the European Court of Human Rights and this decision is above the decision of the Swiss court. This is unacceptable. (Interview with a co-president of Valais cantonal branch, Cyrille Fauchère, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

It means Switzerland needs to accept the evolution of the European law and apply it in Switzerland, and if it does not, then it is the European tribunal that decides if this is fair to not apply the European law in Switzerland. Mr. Barroso finished the exceptional regime for Switzerland and now the rules of the European Union prevail. So, the debate became legal, not only political. (Interview with the secretary general of the Vaud cantonal branch, with Kevin Grangier, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

Thus, it is important to underline that the effects of the EU integration did not only manifest themselves through an economic lens, which concerned labour market pressures, but also involved a legal lens, which was equally important. The necessity of Swiss law to comply with the EU law was unacceptable for the SVP and was another reason for the opposition towards the EU.

The Europeanisation of the Swiss immigration policy, namely the free movement of persons also meant that “EU workers (employed or self-employed) enjoy the right to social assistance benefits under the same conditions as nationals of that member state” (Fernandes, 2016: 11). Even though limiting welfare access only to Swiss citizens has always been a part of the SVP’s rhetoric, the free movement of people within the EU only reinforced this trend. Lack of control over EU migration, which led to labour market concerns was a primary reason for the SVP to launch the collection of signatures for the Initiative Against Mass Migration in 2011. The SVP’s discourse on labour market anxieties particularly concentrated around cross-border migration from the neighbouring EU countries: France, Italy and Germany, which was one of the reasons why the party launched the Initiative. The SVP argued that cross-border workers contribute to higher unemployment levels and to the suppression of wages by taking the jobs for lower salaries than the Swiss (Interview with the vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016; Interview with a national councillor, Claudio Zanetti, 2016). Free movement of people that brought welfare and labour market anxieties was an opportunity for the SVP to eventually launch the Initiative Against Mass Migration in 2011. While the party was previously unsuccessful in blocking the extension of the free movement of people to new member states, it was able to score major success only once the free movement of people was in full swing. The effect of the free movement of people was the key driver behind the Initiative Against Mass Migration (Interview with a former national councillor, Ulrich Schlüer, 2016; Interview with the vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016; Interview with a co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Jérôme Desmeules, 2016).

Overall, effects of the EU integration were one of the causal factors that shaped the SVP’s hard line immigration stance. The party has been consistent in its opposition to the free movement of people and its extension to the new member states. The opposition to the EU was centred around the loss of sovereignty, which manifested itself in the lack of control over EU migration and the necessity of cohesion between the Swiss law and the EU legal framework, particularly on the free movement of people principle. The

impossibility to control EU migration raised labour market and welfare anxieties, which eventually led to the Initiative Against Mass Migration, which aimed to stop free movement of persons.

#### **5.4.3 Perceived concerns over economic development**

This research found that perceived concerns of the public over the economic development of Switzerland led the SVP to drive Swiss immigration policy in a more restrictive direction. Economic anxieties brought by the free movement of people were the main driver behind the Initiative against mass migration. The party decided to launch the Initiative in 2011 as the impact of the free movement of people put pressure on the Swiss labour market by creating competition for Swiss jobs with the whole Europe (Interview with a co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Jérômê Desmeules, 2016).

Economic anxieties were brought forward by the lack of control over EU migration.

This was an economic perspective, the fear of losing a job, the fear that foreigners will be privileged because when companies are hiring, they always want to import... it's cheaper, this was the fear. Primarily it was an economic perspective. (Interview with a former national councillor, Hans Fehr, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

These economic concerns were primarily about the competition on the labour market, which was also linked to unemployment concerns. Furthermore, from the party's perspective, free movement of people did not only create labour market concerns for low skilled immigration, but also affected highly skilled migration. The party viewed uncontrolled intra-EU migration as a threat to both low- and highly-skilled Swiss population, which the SVP used to argue about the bigger impact of EU immigration on Swiss society, thus, appealing not only to the working-class, but also to middle class voters.

Unemployment, is the other concern. What is interesting, is that it creeps in some better paid jobs. In the beginning immigration was really low qualified, but now you have higher qualified immigration, which is no longer limited in the European Union. And they start to compete directly with average paid people, people with a salary of 60-70 thousand CHF a year. And this becomes a bit threatening. Before, it was only very low qualified labour, which nobody wanted to do and very high qualified personnel, which Switzerland did not have. But now it touches the middle class and this affects more people, so I think the economic factor is also a big one. (Interview with a vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016).

On the other hand, the global financial crisis was not used as an opportunity to reinforce SVP's rhetoric on immigration, as economic anxieties around immigration have already been a significant topic on the SVP's agenda (Interview with a national councillor, Andreas Glarner, 2016; Interview with a national councillor, Alice Glauser, 2016; Interview with Geneva's municipal councillor, Eric Bertinat, 2016; Interview with the secretary-general of Vaud cantonal branch, Kevin Grangier, 2016). Relatively speedy recovery of the Swiss economy from the global financial crisis (Interview with a social policy professor at the University of Lausanne, Giuliano Bonoli, 2016) resulted in the increased migration to Switzerland from poorer Eurozone countries, which led to the feelings of insecurity on the labour market (Interview with co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Jérôme Desmeules, 2016). Indeed, with the arrival of the Global financial crisis in 2007, net immigration rose sharply from 49,000 in 2006 to 83,000 in 2007 and plummeting in 2008, by reaching its highest ever peak of 103,000 people (Office fédéral de la statistique, 2016).

Evidence from the interviews demonstrates that the global financial crisis and subsequent Eurozone crisis by themselves were not a sufficient cause *per se* to pursue a tougher immigration line as SVP's immigration rhetoric was not intensified during that time. Rather, the combination of the Eurozone crisis with the effects of the free movement of people led to the immigration policy change. Increased migration from the Eurozone countries during the crisis under the umbrella of free movement of people not only reinforced SVP's anti-immigration and Eurosceptic stance, but also led to the launch of the Initiative against mass migration. The party used economic concerns around the free movement of people as an opportunity to change Swiss immigration policy by launching the Initiative against mass migration.

However, by 2011 we could see that promises were not true and that, in fact, it was ten times higher, but executive promised different numbers to the people before the vote on the European Union, so once we realised that during the financial crisis of 2008, immigration did not go down, but it was at extremely high level, we decided that it was time to act. We could not tolerate this situation, the



situation was still too attractive, even in the times of crisis, to immigrate here. (Interview with the vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016).

Immigration was reframed through social welfare lens because Eurosceptic attitudes of the SVP have been intensifying with the effects of the free movement of people. Even though the discourse has not been as profound as it was in the UK during the Brexit debate, it exists in Switzerland and SVP has been using this sort of rhetoric to reinforce its Eurosceptic position, reframing immigration through social welfare lens (Interview with a social policy professor at the University of Lausanne, Giuliano Bonoli, 2016). SVP's welfare rhetoric, which aims to protect social assistance for Swiss citizens and to create a welfare nation state (Nordensvard and Ketola, 2014) has been a distinct feature of the party for a long time before global financial crisis happened. EU migration is not the only kind that is linked to welfare anxieties, the discourse on welfare concerns is quite profound in SVP's rhetoric when it comes to non-EU migration and is also country-based. If in the case of EU migration, there is no focus on a particular EU country, while in case of non-EU migration, African and migration from former Yugoslavia is portrayed as benefit oriented in SVP's discourse (Interview with a national councillor, Claudio Zanetti, 2016). Finally, in terms of type of migration, welfare concerns were particularly linked to family migration as the party argued that free movement of people permits unrestricted family migration, which was not possible at the times, when Switzerland had strict work permit system for certain categories of migrants.

In SVP's 2014 Initiative Against Mass Migration this is very clearly the phenomenon of family reunification that we have to tackle because before the acceptance of the agreement of free movement of people in 2000, we had a permit of a seasonal worker in Switzerland. These were delivered primarily to the people from Eastern Europe, they came to Switzerland for nine-twelve months and the family reunification was not possible. It was possible for them to live in Switzerland, but not for their families that lived in Romania, Poland. These were tough jobs and they were able to benefit from holidays that took couple of months. And this, this was abolished with the free movement of people and now it is possible because we accepted the agreement. Family reunion is a big chunk of the overall migration. In Switzerland, because of the family reunion we are forced to provide social assistance for the people that do not intend to integrate into the Swiss labour market. (Interview with a secretary-general of the Vaud cantonal branch, Kevin Grangier, 2016). [translated from French by the author].

Thus, the Initiative Against Mass Migration was designed to tackle different kinds of anxieties, including economic ones, such as creating more competition on the Swiss labour market and legal ones, such as necessity of cohesion between EU law and Swiss law. Furthermore, as the analysis of interview data demonstrates, SVP was also concerned about welfare issues and the necessity to provide welfare assistance to higher number of foreigners, which was a result of the family reunification possible under the free movement of people. Anxieties about economic development underpinned SVP's logic of immigration policy change, yet the global financial crisis, and subsequent Eurozone crisis were not sufficient *per se* in producing more restrictive immigration stance of the SVP. The combination of Eurozone crisis with the free movement of people were at the origins of the Initiative.

#### **5.4.5 Perceived threat from Islam**

Identity plays a key role in immigration debate in Switzerland and comes to the forefront of the agenda when it comes to integration matters. Even though Switzerland is culturally and linguistically heterogeneous, integration of immigrants is crucial for the Swiss and Switzerland's citizenship regime can be described as ethnic-assimilationist (Guigni and Passy, 2004). Alongside economy, identity anxieties are also crucial for the explanation of the Swiss immigration policy change.

[...] immigration is not only about economics, it is also about identity, and fear and like factors that cannot that easily be said or described. (Interview with a personal secretary to the State secretary of the State Secretariat for Migration, Stefan Däpp, 2016).

As safeguarding Swiss identity has been at the core of the SVP's agenda, the party led to substantial change in the Swiss immigration policy arguing that Swiss national identity and its existence have been threatened by the presence of foreigners, particularly Muslims. In the context of Switzerland, identity concerns were linked to a particular migration inflow, namely from Middle Eastern and some African countries. The fear of Islam and Islamisation of Switzerland was leading the SVP to toughen the cultural component of the Swiss immigration policy.

I think we make a distinction, particularly in the current context, where we have a big wave of migration from the Middle East, from countries that bring their own cultures with them, different values, Islam. (Interview with a co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Cyrille Fauchère, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

The fear of others (Delanty, 2008), in the Swiss case - Islam and Muslims, as a threat to Swiss national identity, led to the infamous Initiative against the construction of minarets in 2009. The initiative, which was launched by two prominent social conservative party members Ulrich Schlüer and Walter Wobmann, and aimed to safeguard Swiss identity and culture, which has been central to party's rhetoric on immigration, alongside economic anxieties. The fear of losing religious Christian identity and the presence of minarets in Switzerland as symbols of power were at the essence of the Initiative (Interview with a former national councillor, Ulrich Schlüer, 2016; Interview with the vice-president of the SVP, Thomas Aeschi, 2016).

Minaret is a real presence of Islam; the territory of minaret is the territory of Islam. This is significant. We wanted to give a very clear sign that Switzerland will remain independent. (Interview with Geneva's municipal councillor, Eric Bertinat, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

The aim of the Initiative was, however, broader than just to prohibit the construction of minarets, it was about resistance to Islam in general and its principles that allow religion to interfere with the public sphere. The absence of the recognition between public and private sphere in Islam is incompatible with the Swiss way of life, according to the SVP.

The goal we wanted to achieve was that we have to put one, there was one principle that was important - the civil laws of Switzerland are above religious principles. (Interview with Jérôme Desmeules, 2016, co-president of Valais cantonal branch).

The incompatibility between Swiss civil laws and Islam religious principles lies in the heart of the SVP's position. While Swiss civil laws demand strong separation between public and private spheres, Islam does not accept this separation and this underpins the SVP's argument of creating tougher integration policies. The launch of the Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets is an example of how assimilationist views towards cultural integration are spearheaded by the SVP. Though, it should be underlined that assimilation of immigrants has been a distinctive feature of the Swiss citizenship regime,

which is defined as ethnic-assimilationist and “pushes towards assimilation to the norms and values of the national community on an ethnocultural basis and tends to exclude those who are not entitled to sharing its norms, values and symbols” (Guigni and Passy, 2004: 58). Assimilation to the Swiss norms and the way of life is primordial for understanding SVP’s logic on launching the Initiative against the construction of minarets. The nature of Swiss citizenship regime, which favours assimilation of immigrants explains the logic of resistance to foreign cultures and to certain extent SVP’s success in appealing to the voters using Islamisation of Switzerland as a perceived identity threat.

But the problem is that there are non-integrated foreigners and Swiss people wanted to explain themselves that they are not happy with nonintegrated foreigners. Because these people, in general it is not a problem to build a minaret, because who cares, but for many people this is a sign of non-integration. (Interview with a national councillor, Sebastian Frehner, 2016).

Despite Switzerland being ‘pluralist towards the cultures officially recognised within the context of federalism and the existing informal procedures for the integration of national minorities, it is much less pluralist towards the ethnic minorities of migrant origin’ (Guigni and Passy, 2004: 58). It is less tolerant towards the migrants who do not share the same cultural practices as the Swiss, primarily immigrants from Middle East and former Yugoslavia, mainly from Albania and Kosovo, who are by and large Muslims. The fear of different cultures that bring different cultural and religious practices, which interfere with the public sphere and do not recognise the distinction between public and private is one of the underlying causes of anti-Islam attitudes of the SVP.

On the other hand, the person, who lives with the wife and the children, a different tradition... the person, who demands that we construct the mosques, that we have a different menu at school, the separation in swimming pools, the right to wear the veil and the removal of the crucifix, this we will not accept. (Interview with a co-president of Valais cantonal branch, Cyrille Fauchère, 2016). [translated from French by the author]

The attacks in Paris in 2015 and Brussels in 2016 are outside of the scope of this research, they should be mentioned as they only strengthened anti-Islam sentiment through security lens on the agenda of the SVP (Interview with a national councillor, Alice

Glauser, 2016). Identity discourse continues to be dominated by anti-Islam sentiment with the SVP collecting the signatures for the new initiative “Yes to the prohibition of covering face in public”. If the party succeeds in collecting enough signatures by September 2017, the initiative will be put for a public vote (Chancellerie fédérale, 2016). Following France, which banned covering face in public in 2010, SVP is reframing integration through a security lens not only in its discourse, but also on the level of legislation. While French legislation on prohibiting to cover the face in public was directed against Muslim women, it did not explicitly use language that targeted them. In Switzerland SVP’s proposals contained the words ‘burqa’ and ‘nigab’ in the text of the initiative and was primarily directed towards face covering by Muslim women (L’interdiction de dissimuler le visage, 2017). Terrorist attacks in France and Belgium presented an opportunity structure for the SVP to reinforce anti-Islam sentiment through security lens and to launch the Initiative ‘Yes to the prohibition of covering face in public’. SVP’s discourse on Islam is becoming increasingly security-oriented, linking Islam as a religion to terrorism. It makes generalisations about Islam, Muslims and their integration based on the events that happened in France and Belgium, which creates further unease in the field of citizenship in Switzerland.

If you see now the situation in Europe with these terrorist attacks. I think we can say and we must say. Nobody is prepared to come and not see whether it is a good willing person or not? Is this person armed or not? I think it is no longer acceptable in the situations we have now in Europe... (Interview with a former national councillor, Ulrich Schlüer, 2016).

Identity anxieties over Islamisation of Switzerland underpinned the logic of SVP’s position on integration and led to subsequent immigration policy change – The Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets, which was accepted by the Swiss electorate in 2009. Swiss assimilationist citizenship regime characterised by the necessity of foreign culture to assimilate in the Swiss society has been conducive to the popularisation of the SVP’s rhetoric on integration. SVP’s anti-Islam discourse became increasingly connected to the security lens after Paris and Belgium attacks, which led the party to launch a new anti-Islam initiative against covering face in public places in March 2016.

In SVP's discourse identity concerns about Islam are presented not only through the difficulty in integration to the Swiss society, but also through a security lens as the party was building on the perception that Islam is a threat to Swiss security by linking Islam to terrorism.

### **5.5 Causal mechanisms**

Understanding what are the underlying causes of immigration policy change constitutes only the first part of the explanation why the change occurred. Equally it is important to explain what were the mechanisms responsible for the success of the change. The main finding is that two mechanisms: framing and direct democracy permitted the SVP to pursue more restrictive immigration policies. First, framing was an argumentative mechanism that allowed the party to use not only anti-immigrant rhetoric, but, in particular, anti-establishment rhetoric in order to provide a fundament for further political action. This criticism of governmental position enabled the SVP to use direct democracy to set the agenda on immigration, by launching the initiatives and leading to immigration changes from bottom-up rather than top-down angle. Thus, the dissatisfaction with the government and its immigration stance led to the (ab)use of the mechanism of direct democracy by the SVP, which was a procedural mechanism that aimed at implementing the argumentation into policies, and resulted in the adoption of more restrictive immigration policies between 2003 and 2015.

#### **5.5.1 Framing**

In the studied period, immigration stance of the SVP has been restrictive and Eurosceptic, focused on opposing immigration, opposing enhanced integration with the EU and popularising anti-Islam sentiment. The SVP has continuously repeated the need for limiting and controlling migration, both from the EU and from the third countries. The essence of the SVP's Eurosceptic position was in blaming intra-EU migration to Switzerland for creating unemployment and labour market concerns. Certain intensification of the hard line Eurosceptic stance became more evident, when Switzerland extended on numerous occasions the principle of free movement of people

to the new EU member states. With regard to integration and identity, the SVP has been engineering anti-Islam sentiment, which it linked to the discourse on law and order. Finally, immigration was reframed through social welfare lens in SVP's discourse as the party attributed blame for welfare abuse to immigrants (Interview with a national councillor, Claudio Zanetti, 2016; Interview with a national councillor, Andreas Glarner, 2016; Interview with a national councillor, Heinz Brand, 2016). SVP viewed immigrants as a drain on the Swiss welfare system, especially intra-EU immigrants, which exercised the right to welfare access under the free movement of people principle. SVP's rhetoric portrayed migrants as benefit scroungers, accusing them of coming to Switzerland because of its generous welfare assistance. Prognostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201), which proposed the solution to the above mentioned issues, included the restriction of welfare entitlements for immigrants. By linking immigration with welfare anxieties, SVP combined economic and socio-cultural frames and used economic cleavage (welfare) to reinforce the socio-cultural one (immigration). In sum, prognostic framing of immigration has been consistent between 2003 and 2015 with SVP blaming immigrants for various problems, including cultural and economic ones. This prognostic framing, which aimed to restrict immigration and enhance the integration of immigrants, particularly Muslims, served as a rationale for pursuing tougher immigration policies.

It is important to highlight that framing of immigration in a restrictive way did not always result in the successful implementation of the pledges. Thus, when the mastermind of the party Christoph Blocher was elected into the Swiss government in 2003 and subsequently became the head of the FDJP, the party was able to influence immigration policy through parliamentary and governmental routes. Thus, during the 2005 autumn parliamentary session, an amendment that was designed to tighten rules for family reunification, was supported by other parties (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015). Other parties supported the amendments because they were concerned about party competition and the electoral success of the SVP (Interview with Andreas Glarner, 2016). SVP's positions were able to be translated into policies through top-down approach,

when the representative of the party (Blocher) was in charge of the federal department responsible for immigration matters: FDJP. However, when Blocher failed to get reelected to the Swiss government in 2007, subsequently losing FDJP, the SVP lost its primary role in immigration agenda setting. The party was unable to fully influence immigration policy-making through parliamentary and governmental routes. However, it should be emphasised that being in charge of the FDJP does not automatically result in the implementation of the SVP policies, because in the end, decision-making process in the government is collective, but the FDJP sets the direction of immigration policy-making (Interview with a personal secretary to the State secretary of the State Secretariat for Migration, Stefan Däpp, 2016; Interview with the vice-president of the Federal Commission on Migration, Etienne Piguet, 2016). As the SVP lost an opportunity to influence immigration policy-making from within the government as much as they wanted, the party resorted to the use of direct democracy, which is a second mechanism that enabled the SVP to redefine Swiss immigration policy in a more restrictive way.

#### **5.5.2 Direct democracy**

The inability to find consensus with major political parties in parliament on immigration and EU drove the SVP to the use of direct democracy, which referred to the actual immigration policy change. The party continued its anti-immigration framing, which was necessary for popularisation of the SVP's positions via direct democracy. The absence of agreement on immigration with other major political parties and the consensus character of decision-making process in Switzerland enabled the party to resort to direct democratic instruments to shape Swiss immigration policy. The analysis of the interviews points to the two primary reasons that led the SVP to use the mechanism of direct democracy to pursue its restrictive immigration stance. First, the absence of the political will (*la volonté politique*) and second, the anti-establishment rhetoric with a particular opposition to governmental stance on immigration. The lack of political will of the Swiss government to pursue more restrictive immigration policies, to adopt more Eurosceptic position drove the SVP to opt for other means that would allow the party to implement tougher immigration policies (Interview with a national councillor, Alice Glauser, 2016;



Interview with a former national councillor, Hans Fehr, 2016; Interview with Geneva's municipal councillor, Eric Bertinat, 2016). The use of anti-establishment rhetoric on immigration permitted the party to resort to direct democracy in their attempt to introduce tougher immigration stance (Interview with a former national councillor, Ulrich Schlüer, 2016; Interview with a secretary general of Vaud cantonal branch, Kevin Grangier, 2016; Interview with a national councillor, Claudio Zanetti, 2016).

The lack of the political will of the elites to defend the interests of the people and the critique of governmental policies are the distinctive features of populist parties. Because of the specificity of the Swiss political system, the mechanism of direct democracy resulted in a bigger success for the SVP in shaping Swiss immigration policy, than the one the party had on parliamentary arena. SVP managed to translate this populism into more restrictive immigration policies. As the party has always had a distinct stance on immigration, which was rarely supported by other major parties in the parliament, it was unable to advance its view on immigration through parliamentary route. The distinct feature of the Swiss political system, which is a consensual democracy, requires major political players to reach an agreement during decision-making process. The failure to do so permits any dissatisfied political party to pursue a different position by launching a popular initiative, which acts as an agenda-setting tool (Papadopoulos, 1997). The peculiarity of the Swiss political system of consensual democracy allowed the SVP to pursue anti-establishment rhetoric despite being the most popular party in Switzerland since 2003 (Interview with a personal secretary to the State secretary of the State Secretariat for Migration, Stefan Däpp, 2016) and to resort to the instruments of direct democracy. As, by and large, the SVP has been a lone wolf on immigration, it was the key mechanism through which they managed to change Swiss immigration policy.

Anti-establishment rhetoric justified the use of direct democracy as the latter one emphasises the role of the people in decision-making process and corresponds to the populist nature of the SVP, which consistently accentuated its rhetoric on the importance

of defending people's interests. This was highlighted in the case of the Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners (implementation) that was launched to correct the implementation of the initial Initiative that was accepted in 2010.

If the government does not respect the decisions of the people, this is bad. For instance, the removal of foreign criminals, the government took some time, the parliament did not respect exactly the decisions of the people and that is why we made a second initiative on foreign criminals (the implementation). (Interview with a former national councillor, Hans Fehr, 2016). [translated from French by the author].

When parliamentary channels of decision-making do not work, any party can resort to the instruments of direct democracy, which the SVP has been consistently using especially since its electoral breakthrough in 2003. Though, direct democracy has been a more successful route for the party to redefine Swiss immigration policy, it is, nevertheless, a lengthy process that usually takes couple of years before an initiative can be presented a popular vote. The SVP resorted to direct democracy as it is the people, who decide, not the elites: "If we look at the other countries in Europe, it's the government who is creating the immigration policy. But here in Switzerland there is a possibility to have an initiative." (Interview with a national councillor, Heinz Brand, 2016). Despite the opposition of other major parties to the SVP's initiatives, the party managed to score some major victories.

If you look at France, when the president wants to decide something, if he has the majority then it is done. But we have direct democracy in Switzerland, many parties and everyone needs to be more or less satisfied. You don't have make alliances to pass legislation, but if you feel that it goes against the people - you collect signatures for the referendum or for the initiative. And what has changed in the last fifteen years that the opinion of the government is not any more the word of God. Before that it was an extremely rare case that the initiative would be accepted if the government says no, now it's not the case anymore (Interview with a co-president of Valais cantonal branch, Jérômê Desmeules, 2016).

Between 2003 and 2015, SVP also used optional referendums as a veto tool to stop enhanced integration between Switzerland and the EU in the area of the free movement of people. On this battleground SVP has been less successful as the people supported the principle and its subsequent extensions to the new member states. Eurosceptic positions of the SVP did not find much support on direct democratic arena as the party

failed to prevent the extension of the free movement of people to new EU member states twice and failed to block the adoption of Schengen and Dublin Agreements in 2005. However, with regard to immigration policy more generally, the party had three major successes. First, the adoption of the Initiative against the construction of the minarets in 2009, the Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners in 2010 and the Initiative Against Mass Migration in 2014, which aimed to limit EU migration to Switzerland. Therefore, direct democracy has been more effective mechanism for the SVP in Swiss immigration policy change compared to parliamentary route as the party failed to make political alliances with other parties on immigration and the EU.

### ***5.5.3 Causal chain of the change in SVP's immigration stance and evolution of the Swiss immigration policy***

The last part of this chapter draws a causal chain, which incorporates causal factors that were behind the SVP's immigration stance and sheds the light on causal mechanisms that accounted for this change. The mechanisms occur when there is a presence of both entity and activity, which together produce an outcome (Beach and Pedersen, 2008: 30). This research found two mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change in the Swiss case: framing and direct democracy. The following figure presents a complete causal chain of immigration policy change in the context in which the change has been happening.

The outlining of the mechanism is not sufficient to explain why change occurred as only "the interaction between mechanisms and context is what determines the outcome" (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 1151). For a mechanism to be triggered context is explanatory (Pawson, 2001: 5), therefore one needs to explain how the context affected the activation of the mechanism. This research found that framing of immigration in a negative light by the SVP was possible as the context of immigration positions of the other major parties and Swiss government, which presented an opportunity for the criticism and advancing contrary positions on immigration. Furthermore, in the context of pro-EU attitudes of the

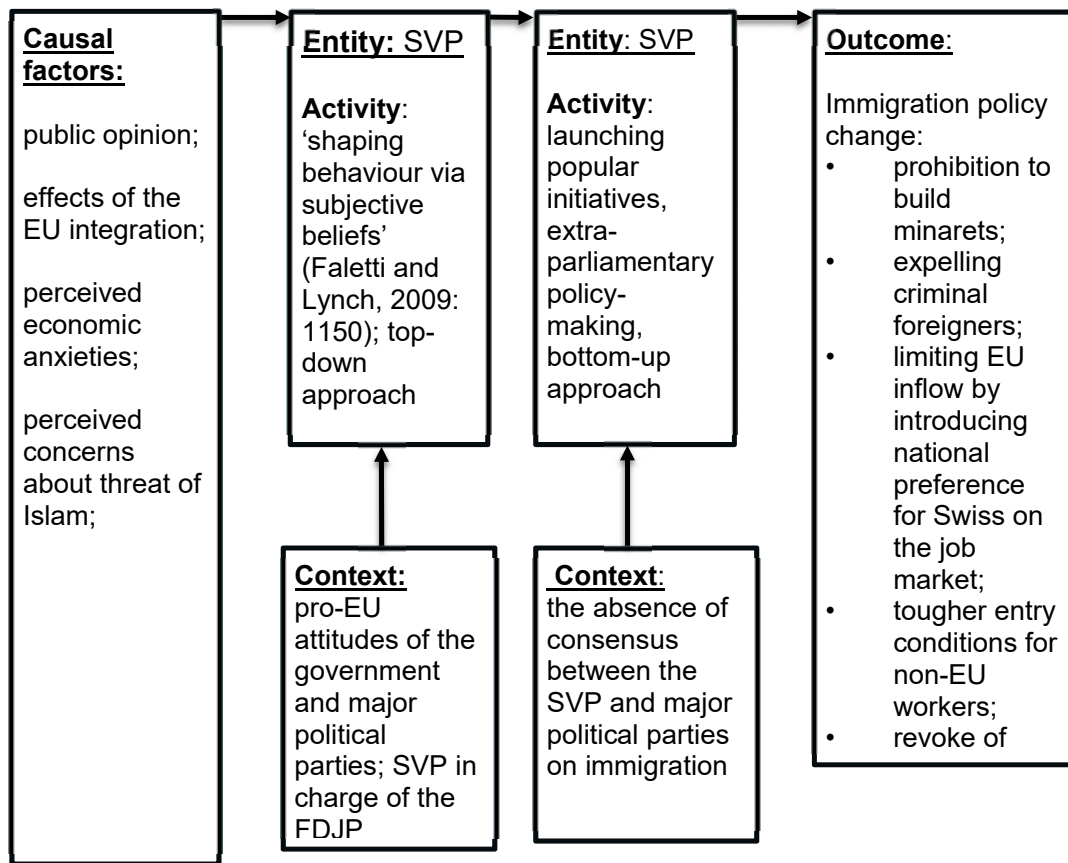


Figure 2: Causal chain of Swiss immigration policy change

government and in the context of enhanced cooperation between Switzerland and the EU with regard to the free movement of people and Schengen and Dublin agreement, this enabled SVP to pursue an anti-establishment position on the issue, by presenting a contrary view on immigration. The success of framing, in other words, the ability of the party “to shape behaviour [...] about appropriate, desirable political actions” (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 1150) was dependent on whether the SVP was in charge of the FDJP. Thus, during 2004-2007, when Cristoph Blocher was the head of the FDJP, SVP had more leverage in influencing the direction of policy-making more than when it lost control of this department. Hence, being unable to influence immigration-policy making from within the government, the party has focused its efforts on launching popular initiatives on immigration, which was possible through a second mechanism of direct democracy. The mechanism of direct democracy was activated because of the absence of agreement among political players and the SVP on immigration. The mechanism partially accounted for immigration policy change depending on whether popular initiatives were

accepted by the population. However, optional referendums, which SVP launched as a veto instruments to the closer cooperation between the EU and Switzerland on the issue of the free movement of people, were a failure and the party was not able to prevent the change of immigration policy in that area.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

This chapter traced causal factors that underlie SVP's logic in immigration policy-making and identified and explained the mechanisms that account for Swiss immigration policy change between 2003 and 2015. Three hypotheses set in the introduction of the chapter were confirmed. SVP's stance on immigration, which subsequently led to the evolution of the immigration policy in a more restrictive direction, was based on the importance of public opinion on the issue, partial loss of sovereignty to the EU on immigration policy, perceived economic anxieties of the public, closely connected to the free movement of people and, finally, identity concerns about the Islamisation of Switzerland and integration of Muslims. Though, the hypothesis that SVP pursued restrictive immigration stance as a response to public opinion on the issue is only partially confirmed as, on one hand, the party has always had strong anti-immigration and Eurosceptic stance, but public opinion was used more as a justification for defending the right of the people against the elite, which is a distinct feature of populist parties. Furthermore, the party massively engineered public opinion on immigration and the EU over the years, campaigning for limiting migration, reinforcing anti-Islam sentiment and arguing for less integration with the EU. Even though it was not the aim of the chapter to demonstrate this, it should be mentioned, nevertheless, to highlight that the party did not only respond to public opinion, but also, ultimately created it. The analysis of interview data also tested the hypothesis about the influence of the global financial crisis on immigration stance of the SVP and found that it was not a sufficient cause *per se* for the SVP to adopt tougher immigration stance. However, the combination of the Eurozone crisis, that was a result of the global financial crisis, with the effects of the free movement of people led to the launch of the Initiative Against Mass Migration.

Two mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change pursued by the SVP were framing and direct democracy. SVP, first, used diagnostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-2010) to present and justify their anti-immigration view-point, and, second, used prognostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) to propose the actions needed to be taken to curb immigration. Thus, framing served as a discursive mechanism for the SVP to translate their anti-immigration stance into policies. Framing permitted the party to influence the direction of immigration-policy making through governmental route (top-down approach), when Christoph Blocher was the head of the FDJP. However, Blocher's failure to get reelected to the government in 2007 and subsequent loss of control over the FDJP, led to the absence of control over the direction of immigration policy-making. Hence, the party resorted to the use of direct democracy, which led to the evolution of Swiss immigration policy. The lack of consensus on immigration between the SVP and other political parties led to the immigration policy change through direct democratic route (bottom-up approach). The ab(use) of direct democracy enabled the SVP to redefine immigration policy in a more restrictive way. This highlights the importance of the agency in the Swiss case as the activation of direct democracy mechanism was not possible without the agency of the SVP. Therefore, while structural factors provide an insight into the logic of political parties' stances, agency related explanations explain how subsequent policy change happens. The findings that agency is important in explaining immigration policy presents a different perspective on the role of mainstream political parties in a change, thus complementing the theories that examine contextual factors as triggers of party policy change. The next chapter proceeds with the French case of immigration policy change and the role of the UMP in it.

## Chapter 6

### Immigration during Sarkozy's era: economic orientation and cultural backlash

#### 6.1 Introduction

Between 2002 and 2012 immigration policy in France has experienced major tightening, which is closely associated with the policies pursued by Nicholas Sarkozy since he became minister of the Interior in 2002 until the end of his presidency in 2012. Not only immigration policies, which are associated with the management of various immigration inflows, but also integration policies, which primarily focused on the incorporation of Muslims and immigrants from a North African background, became more restrictive. Sarkozy adopted a more restrictive approach for family reunification, arguing for a more selective approach, that would focus on bringing highly skilled migrants instead of family migrants. Furthermore, he considerably toughened the entire integration paradigm, by reinforcing integration of migrants and making it a condition for obtaining a long-term residence permit in the future. Finally, he framed his integration discourse through a Muslim frame (Tiberj and Michon, 2013: 586), which led to the adoption of the law prohibiting the wearing of headscarves in French public schools and the ban of full veils in French public places. The chapter traces the causes behind the changing nature of his immigration stance and the mechanisms that accounted for this change. French immigration policy has undoubtedly been influenced by the electoral breakthrough of Front National's (FN) leader Jean-Marie Le Pen in 2002 during the presidential elections and the FN's subsequent electoral growth, especially after his daughter Marine Le Pen became leader of the party in 2010. However, this chapter is not going to focus solely on the impact of the radical right FN on the immigration stance of the right-wing parties, but it will explain how the FN had a significant indirect impact (Schain, 2006) on the evolution of the French immigration policy. As the French right-wing UMP has been in power for ten years from 2002 until 2012, Sarkozy and his party have been responsible for a decade of immigration policy-making. The chapter argues that the main causal factors that have led to introduction of more restrictive immigration policies among the French

conservatives are negative public opinion on the issue, increasing pressure from the FN, economic concerns over immigration, identity anxieties about Islam and integration of Muslims into French society. Furthermore, it argues that the global financial crisis impeded the successful implementation of Sarkozy's electoral pledge on increasing highly skilled labour migration. The chapter argues that while framing and institutional reshuffle were two mechanisms that accounted for this change, departmental competition, which stemmed from the institutional reshuffle explained the failure of certain promise Sarkozy gave to be translated into policy outcomes.

France presents a particularly interesting case for two reasons. First, it has a high proportion of immigration and immigrant origin population, making France the biggest country in terms of the number of Muslim population in Europe (Adida et al., 2014), which makes integration and the question of national identity a prominent issue in French political debates. As a former colonial power France has experienced a large intake of immigrants arriving from its former colonies - Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, but also from other countries of North Africa. The socio-economic status of immigrant and immigrant origin French population still remains disadvantageous with higher unemployment rates and unfavourable fiscal positions of immigrant households (OECD, 2013: 147). Moreover, as a high percentage of North African immigration is Muslim, the integration debate is mostly focused on Islam and the *co-habitation* of Islam with the republican principles *liberté* (liberty), *égalité* (equality) and *fraternité* (fraternity) (van Houdt et al., 2011: 417). As Simon (2013: 210) highlighted in the integration debate the problem of integration of immigrants is referred to as African migration, from former colonies, rather than that of Turkish or Asian origin. Muslim immigration in secular France, where the principle of *laïcité* (secularism) dominates the French way of life poses numerous challenges (Vaisse, 2004: 3), including the debates on headscarves and veils that have long dominated French society and political circles (Guiraudon, 2005: 166).



Second, the presence of strong and growing electoral fortunes of radical right FN that has been successfully politicising immigration and presenting a challenge for mainstream political parties to address the issue. Since 1980s, the presence of the FN, whose rhetoric focused largely on immigration, increased the salience of the immigration issue in France to the extent that “by the 1997 legislative elections, it could legitimately be described as France’s third biggest political force” (Drake, 2011: 75). Since then, the party has been gaining popular support, as it has been seen in 2002, when its then-leader Jean-Marie Le Pen got to the second round of the presidential election. The latest 2017 French presidential election saw Marine Le Pen gaining almost forty per cent of the second-round vote, confirming that FN’s Eurosceptic and anti-immigrant stance has been penetrating into the French society that has become more acceptable of such ideas.

#### **6.1.1 Argument**

The argument put in this chapter is that under the UMP’s and Sarkozy’s governance, the party’s immigration stance and subsequent immigration policy have become increasingly restrictive as a response to shifts in public opinion, threat from the FN, perceived identity anxieties and perceived economic concerns of the population, including the 2007 global financial crisis and, finally, the effect of the EU integration. The presence of these causal factors is tested through the analysis of elite interview data.

#### **6.1.2 Plan of the Chapter**

The chapter is laid out as follows. The second section sets out the context of immigration politics in France by providing a brief history of French immigration and by examining the importance of a semi-presidential regime, which outlines power-relations when it comes to policy-making. Furthermore, it addresses the importance of *laïcité* which is crucial for the development of integration policies as integration occupies a salient niche in the French immigration debate. The third section proceeds with the elaboration of immigration laws that were modified and adopted during Sarkozy’s period as a minister of the Interior between 2002-2004 and 2005-2007, Sarkozy’s electoral programmes for 2007, 2012 presidential elections and immigration policy changes taken during his

presidency period from 2007 until 2012. The next section identifies causal factors that led Sarkozy and his party to tighten French immigration policies. The final section draws a complete causal chain explaining the logic of immigration policy change in France, setting out causes and mechanisms responsible for the change. The chapter concludes by discussing the importance of structural factors in shaping immigration policy in France and the significance of the agency in activation of the mechanisms such as institutional reshuffle, which led to the departmental competition.

## **6.2 Setting out the context**

### **6.2.1 Immigration in France**

It is crucial to sketch out the fabric of immigration to France to understand and explain the direction of French immigration policy between 2002 and 2012 and to explain the debate around integration as majority of the French immigrant population and population of immigrant origin comes from former colonies. France is known as the oldest country of immigration in Europe (Carvalho and Geddes, 2012: 1) and it is estimated that “at least one in five French people is deemed to have at least one foreign ancestor in their family tree” (Drake, 2011: 54). As a former empire France has experienced a large inflow of immigrants arriving from its former colonies, primarily Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia (Maghreb countries), but also from other countries in North Africa and Asia (Hollifield, 2014). To understand French immigration statistics, some conceptual clarification of terms is needed. In France, there is a distinction between a foreigner and an immigrant. According to the definition adopted by the High Council of Integration (*Haute Conseil d'Integration*), an immigrant is a person, who was born abroad of foreign nationality and resides in France, and the status of immigrant is permanent, even after the acquisition of the French nationality, and the status of being an immigrant is based on the country of birth (INSEE, 2016a). A foreigner is a person that resides in France, but does not possess French nationality, and a foreigner is not necessarily an immigrant, this person could have been born in France (usually in case of minors) and, contrary to the immigrant status, foreign status can be changed and the person, born in France would become

French by acquisition (INSEE, 2016b). Therefore, immigrant population numbers comprise of both foreigners and immigrants.

The share of immigrant population in France relative to its population size has increased from 8.1 per cent in 2006 to 8.9 per cent in the beginning of 2014 (INSEE, 2016c). In the latter half of the twentieth century, the French population has experienced major transformations, both in terms of numbers, and in terms of nature and origins of those immigrating to France. As a former empire that had colonies on the African continent, France has received substantial colonial immigration before and after the collapse of its empire. Thus, a lot of French nationals are descendants of immigrants, and around sixty per cent of those who acquire French nationality per year are of African origin (Guiraudon, 2005: 154). After the Second World War, colonial migration to France was explained by the need for foreign labour to rebuild the country (Edminston and Dumenil, 2009: 228; Guiraudon, 2005: 154). The economy was largely dependent on the foreign labour force during the *trente glorieuses*, the three-decade period of economic flourishing that followed the end of the Second World War (Hollifield, 2014: 164). However, the changes in the global economy changed the direction of French immigration policy. Once the oil crisis hit the Western Europe and the US in the 1970s, France revisited its policy on foreign workers and the direction of French immigration policy changed, halting of foreign labour recruitment, except for highly skilled and seasonal workers (Guiraudon, 2005: 154).

French immigration approach changed by constraining labour migration, while family reunification was not restrained. It was relatively easy to slow labour migration as a response to economic difficulties, but it was not so simple to halt family migration, which was “humanitarian in nature and constitutionally protected” (Hollifield, 2014: 165). Family migration, primarily from the former colonies has constituted a large part of the immigration to France in 1970s. In that period, the government of Valéry Giscard d’Estaing tried to stop and prevent further family migration by deporting the majority of

North Africans, especially Algerians (Weil, 2005: 18). The government wanted to forcefully deport Algerians, who have legally entered France and have been living in there for years, but due to the big public outcry from civil society, churches, syndicates, left-wing parties and the Council of State, the policy was later abandoned (Weil, 2005: 18). During the presidency of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, France experienced major tightening of immigration policies, which was largely a result of the economic crisis, but under the leadership of the left-wing François Mitterrand, France has seen a certain liberalisation of immigration policies. Hence, it was in 1984 when France allowed all the immigrants, who legally entered the country and who established their life there to stay (Weil, 2005: 17). This led to increases in family reunification from former French colonies in Maghreb.

Restrictions on labour migration and the increased family reunification arrivals during the decolonisation process posed an integration challenge, as the majority of North African immigration to France was Muslim (Freedman, 2004: 128). It became a “major preoccupation in French politics since the mid-1980s” (Gastaut, 2012: 333), when the question of integration entered political agenda. The government reconsidered its attitude towards immigration and integration following the long-term settlement of millions of Muslims (Hollifield, 2014: 166). Thus, recognising the importance of integration, left-wing François Mitterrand announced the politics of integration in 1981 (Edminston and Dumenil, 2009: 231). The slight relaxing of immigration policies by the socialists was interrupted in 1983 with the first electoral success of the radical right Front National (Guiraudon, 2005: 156). Since then, the radical right has heavily influenced the positions of mainstream parties on immigration policies (Guiraudon, 2005: 156). Integration became a prominent issue, when the rightist government returned to office, in 2002, under Chirac's and Sarkozy's presidencies. The headscarf affair (*l'affaire du foulard*) that sparked a heated debate in 2003-2004, reminded political elites of the importance of integration. Even though Muslims represent only seven and a half per cent of the total French population, compared to sixty-three per cent of Christians (Pew

Research Center, 2015), the presence of Islam in France and integration of Muslims remains a contentious issue as Muslim immigration in a strongly secular France poses certain challenges. French society is multicultural in nature, but it rejects multiculturalism *per se*. With a large proportion of French immigrant population and population of immigrant origin, particularly from Magreb countries, and Islam being the second religion in France in terms of numbers (Hollifield, 2014), the issue of integration and Islam remains one of the core in the French immigration debate.

### **6.2.2 France and the EU**

As this chapter, among other exogenous factors, traces whether EU has shaped immigration debate in France, a brief account of the relationship between France and the EU is laid out. The European project, that France was a cofounder of, aimed at restoring French power and exerting influence on European countries (Drake, 2005: 11). France has always supported the idea of *l'Europe puissance* (power Europe), which gave France an opportunity to reinstate its influence (Grossman, 2007: 985). However, the EU's increasing impact on French immigration policy-making yielded the growth of negative public attitudes towards the EU:

France and Europe have, indeed, become entangled in terms of the policy-making process, to the extent of having a significant and increasingly negative impact on French public opinion, to a degree that has damaged contemporary France's reputation and influence among the EU's member states. (Drake, 2011: 209).

The rejection of the EU's constitutional treaty in the 2005 referendum was a big blow for the French establishment, with the public being concerned with the EU expansion and the safeguarding of Europe's borders that might be extended in the future (Drake, 2011: 210). Unfavourable attitudes of the public towards the EU continued with one of the recent polls indicating that support for the EU in France is one of the lowest in Europe with sixty-one per cent of the French population having a negative attitude towards the EU, while only thirty-eight approving of it (Stokes, 2016). Understanding of public opinion towards the EU is important for the explanation whether the EU was one of the factors that led to the evolution of the French immigration policy between 2002 and 2015. Because the salience of the EU as an electoral issue has changed, political elites needed

to accommodate their positions to public attitudes. Even though, a decade ago the salience of EU affairs was quite low in comparison with the domestic issues (Flood, 2005: 63), the situation has undoubtedly changed. Despite the fact that domestic concerns still remain a priority, political leaders cannot disregard the EU, its concerns and challenges and brush the issues under the carpet. Before the 2007 presidential election, both mainstream candidates - Sarkozy and Royal avoided discussions on Europe (Grossman, 2007: 989), but the picture has changed since, with the arrival of Eurozone crisis and increasing electoral fortunes of the radical right FN, who has been a strong advocate of Euroscepticism. The chapter traces whether concerns over the EU have undermined Sarkozy's and UMP's logic on immigration.

### ***6.2.3 Idiosyncrasies of the French political system***

There are three characteristics of the French political system that deserve special mention when explaining immigration and integration policy change. They are semi-presidentialism, assimilationist citizenship regime and French republicanism. First, the importance of semi-presidential regime is primordial in understanding policy change in France as the president is central to the agenda setting. Second, understanding of the French integration debate and policies is largely based on the assimilationist type of citizenship regime, which does not recognise cultural differences and prioritises migrants' acceptance of the French societal values. Finally, secular setup of the France, which is underpinned by adherence to the Republican values, help to explain integration policy changes.

#### ***Semi-presidentialism***

The French semi-presidential regime is crucial in explaining the significance of the agency in French immigration policy-making. Unlike Switzerland and the UK, which are parliamentary democracies, where the head of state, the president or the Queen, play more of a formal role, rather than determine policy-making, France belongs to a semi-presidential regime with considerable powers confided to the president. It is important to address this as later this chapter examines immigration stance and policy changes under Sarkozy's presidency, as he was a crucial actor that shaped French immigration debate

and immigration policy between 2007-2012. Despite having a strong executive, the president still retains more power and France is described as a semi-presidential state, where:

[A] politically powerful President is grafted onto a Westminster-type parliamentary democracy, and where the executive branch of government is top heavy [...] The 1958 French Constitution provides the simultaneous political leadership by both President and Prime Minister. In this system, a directly elected president coexists with the Prime Minister appointed by the President [...] The stronger of the executive duo in terms of the overall policy-making agenda - and certainly in terms of public visibility - is usually the President. (Drake, 2011: 95-96).

President and prime-minister relations are decisive for the development of policy-making and their affiliation to the same party and the alliance between the two makes the policy-making process easier.

Traditionally, the linkage between presidential power and the party system took the form of the emergence of the presidential party [...], the heart of the presidential *majorité* to support governments named by the President. (Cole, 2013: 70).

In France, the president is in charge of policy-making, when he has a parliamentary majority in the National Assembly (Togman, 2002: 120). As during Sarkozy's presidency, UMP held a majority in parliament, French immigration policy was largely driven by him. Thus, the next subsection discusses immigration positions in Sarkozy's 2007 and 2012 presidential election manifestos as well as the immigration policy change that has taken place during his presidency. Furthermore, immigration policy change has also been associated with Nicholas Sarkozy, when he was minister of the Interior during second Chirac's presidency (2002-2007), therefore the following sections of this chapter also incorporates immigration policy change of this period.

#### *Republicanism and laïcité*

One of the underlying principles of French republicanism is the concept of *laïcité* (Drake, 2011: 66), which means that the state does not favour any confession or any particular conception of the good life, while guaranteeing the free expression of every confession, with certain limits (Haarscher, 2011). It embraces "the removal of the religious factor in public life and in exchange, French citizens have the right to uphold any and every creed (with the exception of certain banned sects) in their private life, with some material

support from the state” (Drake, 2011: 66). *Laïcité* comes as a particular challenge for Islam because of Islam’s failure to recognise the separation of church and state. In this way, the conflation of private and public sphere of religious expression has entered French immigration debate. With Islam being the second religion in France in terms of adherents, the integration of Muslims into a French society poses a challenge of the conflict between Islam and French republican tradition, which does not officially recognise the exposure of cultural and religious differences (Marthaler, 2008: 70). Furthermore, “the perception that migrants, particularly Muslim migrants, are no longer assimilable has been a predominant issue in the immigration debate since the mid-1980s” (Marthaler, 2008: 70). While French republicanism requires strong separation between private and public spheres, especially when it comes to religion, Islam fails to accept that separation, which creates tensions in the French society. Republicanism is important because it explains how the issue of Islam in France has become central in the French political debate, which led to the substantial changes in integration legislation with republicanism becoming “the dominant discourse in all discussions of *laïcité*” (Chabal, 2015: 69). Therefore, the changes in integration policy, debate around Islam and integration of Muslims are explained through the lens of republicanism.

#### *Assimilationist model of integration*

France belongs to the civil-assimilationist model, which entails “giving up ethnic-based identities in favor of accepting the republican ideal of the state” (Guigni and Passy, 2004: 39). Emphasising equality, universal and secularism, French integration model prioritises assimilation of immigrants (Marthaler, 2008: 70; Hollifield, 1994). Assimilation to the French republican values of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* lies at the heart of French citizenship (van Houdt et al., 2011: 417). The emphasis of the French citizenship regime is primarily on the cultural acceptance of French values: “France combines short residence requirement and the allowance of dual nationality with fairly strong linguistic and cultural integration requirements and a strong *jus soli* for the second generation” (Ersanilli and Koopmans, 2010: 779). In addition to residency and citizenship requirements, the Contract of Welcome and Integration (CAI - *Contrat d’Accueil et de*



*l'Intégration*) requires new immigrants to adhere to the republican principles and to follow civic and linguistic education, which later serves as the basis for the issuance of a long-residency permit (Chambon, 2006: 28). The identity aspect remains crucial in understanding French immigration policies and this chapter explores whether identity anxieties have been instrumental in the change of French immigration and integration policy between 2002 and 2012.

### **6.3 Immigration under Sarkozy and the Evolution of French immigration policy**

#### **6.3.1 Politics of immigration under Sarkozy as minister of the Interior**

This subsection discusses immigration policy change in France under Sarkozy, first, when he was the minister of the Interior and, second, under his presidency. As “since 2002, French immigration policy has been largely driven by Nicolas Sarkozy” (Marthaler, 2008: 382), the chapter does not examine the immigration stance of the UMP for legislative elections, but instead focuses on Sarkozy’s discourse as he was the leader of the UMP from 2004 till 2007 and largely determined immigration stance of the party. As in France the president plays a central role on the agenda setting if his party has the majority in parliament, the chapter focuses on the examination of Sarkozy’s presidential programmes for 2007 and 2012 presidential elections. The chapter examines major transformations in French immigration policy since Sarkozy became the minister of the Interior in 2002 and till the end of his presidency in 2012.

#### *2003 Law on immigration, residence of foreigners and nationality (Loi relative à la maîtrise de l’immigration, au séjour des étrangers en France et à la nationalité)*

This law was adopted in 2003, a year after Sarkozy was appointed the minister of the Interior. The main objective was to decrease illegal immigration, by introducing longer terms for detention of foreigners, the introduction of the digital finger prints when applying for a visa, the stricter control of accommodation proof (*attestation d’accueil*), and the cancellation of the *double peine* (double sanctions) for those foreigners, who have been born in France and have lived there before turning thirteen (Legifrance, 2003). *Double peine* refers to those foreigners, who have committed a crime in France, who can be deported and who face both prison and expulsion despite having no connections in their

country of origin (Guiraudon, 2005: 156). The goal of the new law was to reduce illegal immigration, which subsequently “would facilitate the integration of immigrants already settled in France” (Marthaler, 2008: 73).

By trying to appeal to Le Pen’s electorate and introduce a tough position on immigration, Sarkozy, nevertheless, made certain proposals that many would view as non-republican, by supporting positive discrimination of ethnic minorities and foreigners’ right to vote in local elections, that distanced him from the positions of the majority of his party (Marthaler, 2008: 75). This was an example of challenging the republican principles of *égalité* and *laïcité*, which undermined “the principles of strict neutrality governing the relationship between the French state and organised religions” (Marlière, 2013: 37). However, such rhetoric did not last for long and in 2004 Sarkozy took a restrictive stance on headscarf affair, which led to the creation of infamous law on banning the religious symbols in French public schools.

#### *Headscarf affair (l’affaire du foulard)*

The headscarf affair has been a contentious topic for French society for nearly thirty years. First debates around headscarves started in 1989 in the suburbs of Paris, in Creil, where three French girls refused to take off their headscarves in the public school (Bauberot, 1996: 9). At that time, the Council of State decided that the wearing of religious symbols at school is not, by itself, incompatible with secularism, provided that it is not ostentatious and the decision to refuse admission may be taken, if necessary, on a case-by-case basis (Conseil d’Etat, 1989). Fifteen years later, in 2003 the expulsion of two female students in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Denis brought the debate back (Van Eeckhout, 2007). To respond to the concerns, French president Jacques Chirac established the Stasi commission, which examined the application of the principle of *laïcité* and issued a recommendation to ban wearing of headscarf in public schools (Le Monde, 2003). This recommendation was voted in March 2004, when both chambers of the French parliament voted in favour of the legislation banning religious symbols in French state schools (*Loi encadrant, en application du principe de laïcité, le port de*

*signes ou de tenues manifestant une appartenance religieuse dans les écoles, collèges et lycées publics*) (Legifrance, 2004). This legislation targeted primarily headscarves, worn by Muslim girls, but it, nevertheless, was not limited to them and also included symbols of other religions: Christian crosses, Sikh turbans and Jewish kippahs (BBC, 2004). The French public was largely in favour of the law, with sixty-nine per cent of the French population supporting it and almost half of the Muslim population being in favour of it (CSA: 2005). Opinion polls show that the public was concerned with the possibility that the arrival of new immigrants from different cultures would threaten French national identity (Martigny, 2009: 27).

The debate around headscarves in France and the introduction of the 2004 law are significant for the development of integration politics because it touches upon the integration of the largest religious minority in France - Muslims. The headscarf affair will see its development and toughening in due course, in 2010, when the French parliament will pass legislation on the prohibition of covering faces in public, more known as a 'burqa ban'. The chapter addresses this question later on. This demonstrates the gap between Sarkozy's political demands of positive discrimination towards foreigners, proposals to finance mosques and the creation of French Muslim Council (Marthaler, 2008: 75) and his policy outcomes, namely the ban of religious symbols in French public schools in 2004.

*The 2006 Law on immigration and integration (Loi relative à l'immigration et l'intégration)*

The second immigration law was passed during Sarkozy's second term as a minister of the Interior. He left the government in 2004 to become a leader of the UMP and he was asked by Chirac to return into a new government to head the Ministry after the rejection of the proposed EU constitution by French voters (Buchan, 2015). The year following his return, the second immigration law was passed on the 24 of July 2006 and has been known as: "his latest effort to open France for high skilled migration, stem illegal immigration, restrict family migration and promote integration into French society" (The

Migration Policy Institute, 2007: 6). The law addressed different types of immigration, including family, work, student and illegal immigration. Furthermore, it also tackled the integration of immigrants on the French territory.

The law reinforced the selective immigration approach, by welcoming highly qualified migrants whose skills were needed for the French economy. Selective migration (*immigration choisie*) was the priority, rather than imposed immigration (*immigration subie*), which referred mostly to family migration. The list of sectors has been established, where the employers could recruit foreigners, who can be given a temporary one year residence permit, which can be renewable according to the duration of the work contract (Vie publique, 2006). Furthermore, the card of 'competences and talents' (*carte compétences et talents*) was introduced for highly skilled third country nationals and was given for the period of three years with the possibility of renewal (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2014). While highly skilled migrants were given priority, the politics towards low-skilled non-EU migrants and EU migrants from new member states continued to be based on the occupation list and temporary work permits (Carvalho and Geddes, 2012: 283).

To limit imposed migration (*immigration subie*), the rules for family migration were considerably toughened. Thus, an immigrant, who wanted to bring his family to France, needed to have lived in the country for eighteen months instead of one year as it was before and had to justify that he or she had enough means to support the family without touching social assistance (Legifrance, 2006). Furthermore, integration of migrants was reinforced with migrants and family members bound to sign the Contract of Welcome and Integration, with making a promise to learn French and to respect French values (Marthaler, 2008: 77). The new law made it harder for spouses of French nationals to receive permanent residence, increasing the number of marriage years required: from two to three (Chou and Baygert, 2006: 5). It can be seen that immigration was reframed through social welfare lens by requiring immigrants to possess enough financial resources, which would prevent any possibility of claiming benefits.

During Sarkozy's term as a minister of the Interior, between 2002 and 2007, French immigration and integration policy have been considerably tightened. Immigration has become more selective, encouraging highly skilled migration, discouraging family migration, introducing tougher integration rules and linking immigration to welfare concerns. The following section demonstrates how Sarkozy's approach has shifted, once he became the president, focusing on the reduction of the overall migration numbers and on national identity concerns, stepping on the territory of the radical right FN.

*Sarkozy's presidential programme 2007*

With economy and employment being the core themes of Sarkozy's electoral campaign, immigration was still at the forefront of his agenda. He continued stressing the importance of a selective immigration approach, which welcomed only those immigrants that France needed. Furthermore, Sarkozy promised the introduction of controversial annual immigration quotas, which contradicted the republican paradigm. His programme stressed the importance of integration into French society by learning French before coming to France, respecting republican values of *laïcité* and equality between men and women (Sarkozy, 2007: 14). Finally, Sarkozy promised to create the Ministry of Immigration, Integration and National Identity (Sarkozy, 2007: 14), which would incorporate all immigration matters under the umbrella of one ministry. Associating immigration with the crisis of national identity and portraying immigration as a danger was comparable with the rhetoric of the radical right FN (Carvalho and Geddes, 2012: 283) and aimed to attract part of the FN's electorate (Carvalho, 2017). The rhetoric on family migration was reframed through social welfare lens, limiting family migration only to those, who have a house and who are employed, which eliminates the possibility of access to family benefits (Sarkozy, 2007: 14). Sarkozy considered that cooperation between the countries in immigration domain was necessary as Europe enables countries to perform better together, where without cooperation countries would cope worse. Yet, at the same time Sarkozy expressed strong opposition to Turkey's entry to

the EU as it would lead to the increase of migration to European states and support for strengthening of the European borders (Sarkozy, 2007: 10).

### **6.3.2 Immigration under Nicholas Sarkozy's presidency**

The salience of the immigration issue under Sarkozy's presidency has been extremely high (Carvalho, 2014: 53; Gastaut, 2012: 333). Immigration policy has undergone major transformations with two immigration laws adopted during his presidential term: one in 2007 and the other one in 2011. The headscarf debate resulted in the adoption of the infamous law that prohibited the wearing of full veils in public places. Finally, there was an attempt to tighten student migration, which was later reversed.

Sarkozy's presidency is characterised by increasingly restrictive immigration rhetoric, with integration and national identity given prominent attention. When Sarkozy became the president in 2007, he started with fulfilling his electoral promise by creating the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development (*Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du Co-Développement*).

The intended role of the new ministry was to curb migration flows, to foster co-development, to improve the social integration of immigrants, and to promote national identity. (Duelund, 2016: 213).

Linking immigration to national identity provoked criticisms from leftists and academics (Ocak, 2016: 83) because of "the institutionalisation of the association between the two issues, which legitimised perceptions of immigration representing a threat to national identity, as proposed by the FN ever since its creation" (Carvalho, 2015: 6). The rhetoric around the creation of this ministry was a sign of 'soft nationalism' (Noiriel, 2007) and aimed at targeting FN voters during the presidential campaign with stressing the importance of national identity and integration (Marlière, 2013: 33). Despite the criticism, the Ministry began operating and, shortly after its creation, prepared its first law on immigration, integration and asylum.

*2007 Law on Immigration, integration and asylum (Loi relative à la maîtrise de l'immigration, à l'intégration et à l'asile)*

This law was passed in November 2007 and brought in some significant changes. This law has focused on family migration and integration of family members, and on making labour immigration more selective, implementing Sarkozy's approach of selective immigration. It aimed to encourage highly skilled migration, by increasing the share of labour migration by fifty per cent, and by decreasing low-skilled and family migration (Sarkozy, 2007). It was an ambitious plan, as at that time labour migration represented only seven per cent of the total long-term residence authorisations (Carvalho, 2015: 7). The new law introduced the card of 'competences and talents' (*la carte de competences et talents*), allowing highly qualified immigrants to get long-term settlement (Carvalho, 2016: 7) and increased the power of national authorities to decide who to let in the country (Challof and Lemaître, 2009).

The new law targeted family migration by toughening integration requirements. Thus, anybody, who would be applying for family reunification or for the long-term visa, needed to show knowledge of French and if need be, the applicant can be asked to follow a short, maximum two-month course in the country of application and to present an appropriate level of French after the completion of the course (Vie Publique, 2007; Legifrance, 2007). In addition, CAI was introduced, which linked access to family benefits with the success of integration (Vie Publique, 2007). Apart from the knowledge of French and the acceptance of the values of the Republic, the law introduced tougher financial requirements for family reunion (Legifrance, 2007). During the parliamentary debate on the law, one of the UMP MPs, Thierry Mariani, proposed a controversial DNA test on family reunion, but this was met with strong opposition from the left-wing parties and the Constitutional Council has ruled that this proposal would be unconstitutional, and it was later dropped (Carvalho, 2016: 8).

*2010 Law prohibiting the covering of faces in public places (Loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public) and the debate on national identity*

Six years after the prohibition of the wearing of headscarves in French public schools, the question of Muslim integration and secularisation returned to the forefront of the political debates. The debate originated from the request of the deputy of French

communist party in 2009 to create a “Commission on the practice of the wearing of niqab and burqa on the national territory” (*Commision d’enquête sur la pratique du port du niqab et de la burqa sur la territoire national*) (Roger, 2010). It is estimated that around 2000 women wear the full veil in France and represent a tiny minority of the four million Muslim population in the country (Camus, 2013). However, French president Nicholas Sarkozy has endorsed the proposition and expressed his view on the ban of the full veil in France saying that: “Burqa is not welcome on the territory of the republic, [...] it is not a religious problem, but a problem of liberty and dignity of a woman” (Robine, 2010: 43). This led to the adoption of the law in September 2010, which prohibited the coverage of the face in public places (Gabizon, 2010). Even though the text of the law did not explicitly mention the word ‘burqa’ or ‘veil’, and did not refer to any religious belonging, it was implicitly directed against Islam and Muslim women wearing full veil. The law, which is more commonly known as the ‘burqa ban’, envisaged a 150 Euro fine for women for wearing a full veil and one year prison sentence and 30,000 Euros fine for men, who would force female members of their family to wear a full veil (Legifrance, 2010). This law was later upheld by the International Court of Human Rights, which indicated that French authorities have the legal right to preserve the idea of “living together” (Jamet and Ceilles, 2014).

Alongside the debate on the full veil, on Sarkozy’s demand, the debate on national identity was launched by the immigration minister Eric Besson. In October 2009 Besson announced: “I want to launch the grand debate on the values of national identity, on what does it mean to be French” (Besson, 2009). He expressed the view that burqa is unacceptable and goes contrary to the values of national identity (Le Monde, 2009). However, contrary to the aim, the debate did not find much support within the French public and was viewed negatively by the majority of the population (Libération, 2010). With the pressure not only from the left-wing camp, but also from within his own party, this debate was abandoned in February 2010 when, after three months of discussions on Islam and xenophobia, Sarkozy was forced to halt the debate because the public



viewed it as in-constructive (Lemarié, 2012). Soon after this, in November 2010, the Ministry of Immigration, Integration and National Identity was dismantled and immigration affairs again returned under the umbrella of the Ministry of the Interior. Thus, “Sarkozy admitted that he had been wrong to create a ministry responsible for immigration and national identity, and that a nationwide debate on what it meant to be French had led to tensions and misunderstandings” (Duelund, 2016: 213). Shortly after immigration affairs returned under the jurisprudence of the Ministry of the Interior, the new immigration law was enacted.

*2011 Law on immigration, integration and nationality (Loi relative à la maîtrise de l’immigration, à l’intégration et à la nationalité)*

The French parliament adopted the new immigration law in June 2011, primarily with the intention of decreasing immigration numbers by allowing for deportation of both EU and non-EU citizens. For the first time, EU immigration has been reframed through a social welfare lens. First, the law introduced the blue European card (*carte bleu européenne*) for highly skilled migrants, which facilitated access to the French labour market and the right to identical residence in any EU country. Second, it allowed for the deportation of EU citizens that have abused the free movement of persons principle and have abused social welfare system. Third, it authorised the deportation of both EU and non-EU citizens that have been in France for less than three years, but have presented a danger for the public order (Legifrance, 2011). Furthermore, in the context of this immigration law, then minister of the Interior Claude Guéant proposed to reduce legal immigration to France by twenty thousand people, which was quite a radical change from 2007 proposals to increase labour migration by fifty per cent (Carvalho and Geddes, 2012: 291). Such change of direction was an electoral attempt to appeal to the FN voters before the upcoming 2012 presidential election (Vincent, 2012).

*Guéant circular (Circulaire Guéant)*

Student migration had never been under the attack during Sarkozy’s presidency, but this changed when the minister of the Interior Claude Guéant promised to limit legal migration before the 2012 presidential election. He, together with the minister of Labour Xavier

Bertrand, co-signed the circular that made professional immigration more restrictive (Pellet, 2015). The circular aimed to decrease the numbers of non-EU migrants on the French labour market by toughening the criteria for the issuance of residence permit to non-EU graduates. This was met with widespread criticism not only by the socialist party, but by the UMP because it endangered France's influence in the education sphere. But the government backtracked its position on the issue only in January 2012, when it presented an additional document that allowed foreign students with a master degree and above to stay in the country and search for a job (Floch, 2012). The text of the new circular emphasised that "the necessity to manage migration should not be done as a detriment of the attractiveness of the French higher education and certain firms, who require highly qualified personnel" (Floch, 2012). Thus, in addition to family and labour migration, student migration became the target of the conservative government as a means to limit migration inflow into France, which manifested itself in the protectionist politics of the French economy from foreign labour.

#### *Sarkozy's presidential programme 2012*

Sarkozy's electoral programme '*La France forte*' (strong France) for the 2012 presidential elections was brief and contained thirty-two short proposals on different policy issues. It suggested decreasing current immigration levels by half, tightening family migration to those who speak French and accept republican values. On Europe, Sarkozy demanded better control of external borders and in the case of failure to do so, France would reinstate its own borders (Sarkozy, 2012: 3). Sarkozy repeated his 2007 electoral pledge on selective migration, arguing that there should not be an automatic family reunion, but a selective one (*Le Monde*, 2012). Even though the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-developement was abolished in 2010, integration still remained a priority issue for Sarkozy alongside the reduction of overall migration numbers (Carvalho, 2017: 10). Even though the programme itself only included short proposals, the development of immigration policies under Sarkozy's 2007-2012 presidency gives a broader view on immigration stance of the right-wing candidate

before 2012 presidential elections. Table 4 presents a comparison between Sarkozy's 2007 and 2012 presidential programmes.

After Sarkozy's appointment as a minister of the Interior in 2002, French immigration policy has experienced considerable tightening. The concept of selective immigration dominated the political debate, and aimed to increase highly skilled labour migration and decrease family migration. Closer to the 2012 presidential elections, the politics of Nicholas Sarkozy shifted towards the reduction of the overall immigration inflow, which subsequently led to the more restrictive policy towards non-EU graduates of French universities. Finally, national identity, integration, Islam and republican values were at

Table 4: Comparison of Sarkozy's 2007 and 2012 presidential programmes

2007 Presidential programme	2012 Presidential programme
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selective immigration approach, increasing highly-skilled labour migration;</li> <li>• integration into the French society, acceptance of the Republican values;</li> <li>• creation of the new Ministry of Immigration, Integration and National Identity;</li> <li>• allow family migration only to those, who are employed and possess enough financial means;</li> <li>• necessity of cooperation between European countries in immigration domain.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• decrease current immigration levels by half;</li> <li>• tighten family migration to those who can speak French and who accept the Republican values;</li> <li>• Europe: better control of external borders;</li> <li>• no automatic family reunion;</li> <li>• reinforce selective immigration approach.</li> </ul>

the forefront of the agenda, especially when Sarkozy became the president of the Republic. The chapter proceeds with the exploration of causal factors that led to the

introduction of more restrictive immigration discourse and subsequent immigration policy change between 2002 and 2012.

#### **6.4 Causal factors**

This research found that Sarkozy's immigration approach underwent major transformation in response to a variety of factors. The importance of public opinion on immigration and integration, increasing pressure from the radical right FN, the worsening of the economic situation in France had an impact on the evolution of the French immigration policy in a more restrictive direction. Global financial crisis accounted for the existence of policy gaps between Sarkozy's political demands of increasing the share of highly skilled migration and the failure to do so. Furthermore, the analysis of the interviews identified that identity anxieties, focused on Islam and integration of the immigrants from North Africa and French of immigrant origin from former colonies, were instrumental in the redefinition of integration policies under Sarkozy. Finally, the research traced that the EU had an impact on the immigration discourse through the security angle, presenting concerns about the external border of the EU and reinforced anxieties about third-country illegal immigration. But overall, the research found EU was not a sufficient factor that shaped the development of French immigration policy by Sarkozy and his party, who were more preoccupied with managing third-country migration inflows and with integration matters.

##### **6.4.1 Public opinion**

Public opinion was a causal factor that led Sarkozy and his government to redefine integration policies, particularly on the co-existence of Islam with French republican values. Furthermore, the importance of public opinion on student migration has changed the approach adopted by the minister Guéant in 2011, which was modified after the disapproval of the Circular by the public. Finally, public attitudes towards the creation of the new Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development and public dissatisfaction with 2009 national identity debate led to the u-turn on immigration policy, halting the national identity debate and dissolving of the Ministry.

Decolonisation and increased family migration from North Africa and beyond, together with unfavourable public opinion on immigration, led to the introduction of the new paradigm of selective immigration (*l'immigration choisie*). Sarkozy's special advisor on immigration confirmed that the change in immigration approach from imposed to selective immigration was dictated by the open-door policy on family migration, which was creating concerns within the French public (Interview with Sarkozy's special adviser, 2016). The selective immigration approach explains the introduction of the new card of competences and talents (*la carte de competences et talents*) for highly skilled immigrants, which aimed to increase highly skilled migration. The change of paradigm also led to the changes in the bureaucratic system, namely to the creation of the small Interministerial Committee on Immigration control (*Le Comité Interministeriel de contrôle de l'Immigration*), which was created during the presidency of Jacques Chirac on a proposal from a senior civil servant, who directed Chirac's presidential campaigns and who was Sarkozy's immigration advisor during his presidency (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). This committee aimed to coordinate immigration matters, which were split between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Integration and Social Affairs, but also served as a platform for developing Sarkozy's ideas on selective immigration (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016).

The importance of public opinion to Sarkozy and his government is shown with the establishment of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development, a fulfilment of his 2007 electoral pledge as immigration was becoming a major concern for the French (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). In December 2006, in his speech during the press conference, Sarkozy highlighted that, according to a SOFRES study, sixty-three per cent of the French think that there is too much immigration in France (Sarkozy, 2006). More precisely, at the same time almost forty

percent of voters said that immigration is very important in influencing their vote and thirty per cent said that it is important enough for them to decide who they will be voting for (Brouard and Tiberj, 2007: 2). Another example that shows the importance of public opinion on immigration for Sarkozy is the halt of the debate on French national identity, which was disapproved by the public and which subsequently led to the dissolution of the Ministry in autumn 2010 (Wihtol de Wenden, 2012: 326).

The failure to implement his selective immigration approach by increasing highly skilled migration at the expense of other inflows made Sarkozy reinforce his immigration position before the 2012 presidential election. In order appeal to the electorate, Sarkozy's immigration discourse gets more restrictive and he promises to cut overall immigration numbers by reducing immigration in half (Sarkozy, 2012). This was impossible, but instrumental in attracting the electorate (Interview with Sarkozy's former special adviser on immigration, 2016). As Sarkozy during his presidency failed to decrease the non-EU migration (Héran, 2017; Tribalat, 2017), other ways to decrease migration were adopted. The minister of the Interior Claude Guéant aimed to reduce overall migration numbers by targeting student migration. In May 2011, Guéant issued a Circular, which prohibited foreign non-EU graduates from staying in France looking for a job upon the completion of their degree. However, the unpopularity of this decision with the public forced Guéant to modify the Circular, allowing graduates to remain in France. The modification came from the large opposition of civil society and political actors, including politicians from within the UMP because it became detrimental to the French educational system and French influence (*rayonnement*) in the world (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016).

Guéant says that soon the government is supposed to present itself to the Council of Immigration and that we should act quickly to decrease the inflow. He takes the decision to enact the Circular on students, which results in criticism and is forced to modify it. (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

For the first time since 2002 student migration became a target of the right-wing UMP because Guéant had concerns over high immigration numbers and their effect on Sarkozy's success before the 2012 presidential election. But public opposition to this restrictive policy made Guéant amend his circular a year later in order to allow students who have at least master qualification to look for a job.

When Claude Guéant became the minister of the Interior, and his former adviser, whom I know very well, told me what happened. So, when he became the minister of the Interior, he saw the immigration statistics since 2007 and he saw that it has increased. So, at the time we are in the midst of presidential campaign and the president is going to tell the people that he increased immigration. This is impossible. And at that particular time he had a brutal politics regarding immigration. (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

Public opinion towards integration also had an impact on the evolution of the immigration policy. The electoral success of the FN in 2002 presidential election signalled the fact that radical right ideas were entering the mainstream political space. The importance of addressing public anxieties about integration and Islam were crucial in showing the French that Sarkozy and his party are responding to the concerns of the public and in insuring that right-wing UMP holds the ownership of the issue (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Inter-ministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). Muslim frame (Tiberj and Michon, 2013: 585-587) was instrumental in Sarkozy's politicisation of integration, and the national identity debate only increased the intolerance towards North-Africans. As Tiberj and Michon (2013: 586) pointed such "systematic use of the Islamic frame promotes and reinforced the theme of a class of values between minorities and the receiving society".

It is hard to disentangle the influence of public attitudes from party competition with the FN, because the change in public opinion on immigration and integration is partly affected by the politicisation of the issue by the radical right FN. Responding to integration anxieties of the public about the incompatibility of Islam with the republican values, primarily, *laïcité*, led to the introduction of more restrictive integration policies.

Sarkozy “succumbed to public pressure to set up a commission to investigate the wearing of religious symbols at schools” (Chabal, 2015: 66). Despite being a contentious issue, the Law on banning religious signs in public schools in 2004 was supported by more than three quarters of the public (IFOP, 2015: 9). Sarkozy continued the debate on Muslim integration, supporting the Communist party’s MP proposal to investigate the wearing of full veils in public (Laxer, 2017). After parliamentary discussions, the law that prohibited the wearing of full veils was passed in 2010, aiming to please the public, but only by treating the symptom of integration failure, not the problem itself (Interview with Sarkozy’s former special adviser on immigration, 2016). By introducing this discourse, Sarkozy politicised the issue of Islam, and by recognising strong attachment of the French to *laïcité*, not only on the right, but also on the left side on the political spectrum (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016), Sarkozy supported the so-called ‘burqa ban’. Despite controversy, this law was overwhelmingly supported by the public with eighty-two per cent approving of the ban (Pew Research Center, 2010).

Thus, the cultural aspects of integration were dealt with, but the problem with integration or the socio-economic status of immigrants and French of immigrant origin remained. It has not undergone major changes because of the absence of political will, as the right-wing UMP worried that increasing the economic investment into integration will not find widespread public support. The former head of the Office of territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of Integration and Social Affairs, and later the head of the Office of territorial integration in the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development, and later in the Ministry of the Interior Marie-José Bernardot pointed to the absence of the political will to improve integration:

If we talk about the politics of integration of immigration, that we should do something positive for the immigrants, but politically there is no courage to do it. There is no wish to really do it. (Interview with Marie-José Bernardot, former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, 2016).



#### **6.4.2 The rise of Front National**

The striking result of the 2002 presidential election was an electoral breakthrough for the radical right FN with Jean-Marie Le Pen making it to the second round. It showed the growing support for radical right ideas in France. Despite losing to the right-wing candidate Jacques Chirac in the second round, Jean-Marie Le Pen and his rhetoric have had indirect effects on immigration stance and policies of the right-wing UMP, who by using an accommodative strategy were making FN's stance more palatable. Even though the majoritarian system kept the FN away from the *Assemblée Nationale*, where the party only had couple of seats, FN's rhetoric has entered mainstream political space. FN's impact on right-wing parties is centred around two important issues of the French immigration policy: first, national identity and integration and, second, the management of migration inflows. As admitted by several MPs from the former UMP, the politicisation of the immigration debate by the FN has forced mainstream parties to redefine their immigration stances and policies:

There is an influence in a sense that FN neutralises two principal parties of the government. It neutralises or, in other words, simplifies the debate. All the decisions that are close to those of the FN become impossible because of the danger to appear like FN. So, all the stakes are at addressing the debate and leave the FN aside. (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016).

The danger of the right-wing's electorate defecting to the radical right FN and the constant politicisation of immigration, national identity and integration by the FN led to the re-examination of right-wing UMP immigration positions. Thus, the UMP and Sarkozy have adopted an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards the FN by arguing for the reduction of immigration and by relaunching integration debate and policies.

The electorate of the Front National pushed other parties to modify their immigration position, in any case, at least to push them to make an impression that they did that. (Interview with Edouard Philippe, current French prime minister, 2016).

Integration also became one of the major concerns of Sarkozy and his Ministry of the Interior after Le Pen's electoral breakthrough in 2002 presidential election. This was also acknowledged by Marie-Jose Bernardot who suggested that:

There is a direct connection between the electoral success of the FN in 2002 presidential election and the re-launch of integration policy in 2003, 2004 and 2006, the will to re-launch instruments of integration in France. (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016).

Furthermore, the promise of creation of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development before 2007 presidential election and the subsequent 2009 debate on the national identity was another example of Sarkozy's accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards FN.

The debate on national identity arose under the pressure from the FN. There would not have been the debate if we did not have such strong FN. The defence of national identity is the electoral question of the FN. And Nicolas Sarkozy knew that and used that. (Interview with former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

While there was sufficient discourse about the intention to improve integration, there was a lack of political will to finance the integration policy and to improve socio-economic situation of the immigrants and the French of immigrant origin (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016; Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016). Governmental policy towards integration of Muslims had more of an assimilative character, which led to the prohibition of ostentatious symbols in French public schools following the 'headscarf affair'. The 2005 riots in Parisian suburbs (*banlieues*), which were a public backlash against the electrocution of two teenagers of immigrant origin followed by the French police (Mucchielli and Goaizou, 2007), signalled about the marginalisation of the French citizens of immigrant origins by the French authorities and triggered integration to become a primary preoccupation for Sarkozy as a presidential candidate. In 2006 the new immigration law was adopted, which reinforced integration and made the CAI mandatory for all newcomers (Loi du 24 juillet 2006 relative à l'immigration et à l'intégration). Furthermore, the 2005 riots in Parisian suburbs and the FN's rhetoric on integration and law and order led to the change

in the integration paradigm of Nicholas Sarkozy. Hence, his approach changed from that of anti-discrimination to the equality of chances, where the emphasis was put on giving everyone equal chances, which is one of the fundamental principles of the French republicanism instead of condemning discrimination (Van Eeckhout, 2005). Former regional director of the FASILD and ACSE described this approach as a step back as such change led to the loss of legal mechanisms responsible for anti-discrimination (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

Because of the enormous pressure of the national identity debate, triggered by the rise of the FN, integration and identity became key concerns that right-wing UMP needed to address (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016). National identity was one of the major topics of Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign with the promise of the creation of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development to tackle the crisis of national identity (Ivaldi, 2008). The analysis of the electoral results demonstrates that such accommodative strategy towards Le Pen's discourse proved to be successful and that Sarkozy managed to attract FN's electorate (Mayer, 2007). After the creation of the Ministry in 2007, Eric Besson launched the debate on national identity in order to fulfil Sarkozy's electoral pledge, but shortly after the start of the debate was viewed unconstructive by the public (Wihtol de Wenden, 2012). This led to the dissolution of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development and the return of immigration under the umbrella of the Ministry of the Interior:

This was a political sign for the FN's electorate to reassure them that he wanted to take care of national identity but the big mistake is that nobody knows what is national identity and nobody can give specific definition of what it is. (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016).

The FN's impact on the right-wings UMP's immigration discourse and policies also manifested itself through the management of immigration inflows. Thus, in 2006 Sarkozy introduced his 'selective immigration' strategy, which aimed to reduce overall immigration to France, by increasing the share of highly skilled labour migration at the

expense of unwanted family migration. With the failure to increase highly skilled migration and the overall increase in migration numbers (Tribalat, 2017) under Sarkozy's presidency, he completely redefined his approach to immigration before 2012 presidential election because of the concerns over the defection of his electorate to the radical right (Interview with Sarkozy's former special adviser on immigration, 2016). His minister of the Interior Claude Guéant promised to cut legal immigration by 20,000 per year and maintain 180,000 net migration level. This Anglo-Saxon quota approach, which is not typical to France, was introduced under Sarkozy. This pledge is an attempt to prevent the alienation of Sarkozy's electorate to the radical right FN in the upcoming 2012 presidential election. In order to show that the government is addressing the concern and adopting an approach to reduce the number, the minister of the Interior Claude Guéant issues a Circular on students, which aims to restrict their access to the French labour market (Interview with Sarkozy's former special adviser, 2016). Overall, FN's impact on Sarkozy's immigration stance cannot be underestimated. However, it should be said that the FN has not been immune to change on the political landscape, by undergoing transformations since its creation, and that there has been "a reciprocal dynamic of influence between the FN and the parties of the centre right" (Shields, 2011: 80). But as the focus of this chapter is on the impact of the FN on the right-wing UMP, it is important to stress that not only Sarkozy, but also other prominent representatives of the UMP have adopted FN's rhetoric on immigration and Islam (Shields, 2013: 192). FN's rise was not the only factor that contributed to the redefinition of the immigration policies in France, but has been a crucial one, which forced right-wing UMP and Sarkozy to reinforce its position on the issue to prevent its electorate from defecting. It led to the implementation of more restrictive immigration policies in France, both regarding integration and regarding the management of the inflows.

#### ***6.4.3 Effects of the EU integration***

Migration from the EU has never been a concern for France, on the contrary, in the post-war period French political authorities had preferences for European migration, instead of migration from former colonies because it was easier to assimilate Europeans than

North Africans (Schain, 2012). Overall, in France EU migration has not been a target of the right-wing's discourse or policies during Sarkozy's era. However, certain concerns towards the EU were present within the right-wing political establishment, but they were not related to the intra-EU migration, they were connected to the security issue of EU's external border. Unlike the UK, EU enlargement did not present a significant concern for the right-wing UMP as France chose to impose transitional labour controls on the new EU member states (Drew and Skinskandaragah, 2007). Despite the absence or substantial concerns with intra-EU migration, the EU, nonetheless, played a salient role in the security discourse on immigration, which manifested itself in a wish to retain control over the EU's external borders. Also, loss of sovereignty, which manifested itself in the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and the French law has created constraints for right-wing parties in power to tighten non-EU family immigration.

The UMP remained primarily concerned with illegal migration coming from other EU member states, especially Italy and the protection of the maritime border with European Border and Coast Guard Agency FRONTEX (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016). France's attachment to the European treaties like Schengen created anxieties because of the lack of control over the French border with other EU member states. The absence of border controls with neighbouring countries creates anxieties about illegal migration stemming to France:

So, they came primarily from the Middle East, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria to get to the UK or other countries in Europe. There is also irregular migration from French colonies, from the black Africa, Maghreb... People, who pass specifically through Italy and arrive to France. (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016).

The lack of control over external EU border led to tensions with Italy in spring 2011, after the Arab Spring, when a number of illegal immigrants entered France from a border with Italy. The inflow of illegal immigrants from North Africa led to the closure of the French internal border with the issue being escalated to the EU level. The biggest French concern regarding the EU is the ineffective control of the EU's border and the malfunctioning of the Schengen area, which erases borders with other EU member

states and creates concerns over the increase of illegal migration to France. Therefore, right-wing parties in power emphasised the need to protect EU's external border because of the migration inflow from the Middle East and the need to transform Schengen to prevent the inflow of illegal immigration to France (Interview with the current French prime minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016). In this sense, the EU posed concerns for right-wing parties in power as ineffective controls of the EU borders led to the increase in illegal immigration.

Second, loss of sovereignty also manifested itself through necessity of cohesion between the French law and the EU law. These concerns related to the impossibility of the French government to reduce unwanted family migration because of the European legal framework (Interview with Edouard Philippe, 2016; current French prime-minister; Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). This dominance manifested itself in the loss of sovereignty, where supranational EU had more control over immigration than previously:

Nowadays the policies are communitarised, visa policies, border control... So, there are subjects where Europe exercises more competence than member states. (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016).

Overall, changes in French immigration policy were not driven by intra-EU migration, however, necessity of cohesion between the French law and the EU law presented certain constraints for right-wing parties in power on the issue of non-EU family reunification.

#### ***6.4.4 Perceived concerns over economic development***

Perceived economic anxieties of the public towards immigration were underpinning the evolution of the French immigration policy between 2002 and 2012 as much as in the past, after the end of the Second World War, when French immigration policy was largely dependent on the economic needs of the country. Global financial crisis that unfolded in 2007 presented a constraint for Sarkozy achieving his desired increase of highly skilled

migration to France. Immigration became intertwined with welfare through the lens of non-EU family migration with Sarkozy's selective immigration approach that focused on decreasing the number of economically non-beneficial migrants.

When the French economy was affected by global economic change during the 1970s oil crisis, the unemployment increased and there was no need for the foreign labour force (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016; Interview with the current French prime minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016). France adopted the same policy as Switzerland: exporting unemployment in economically insecure times by halting foreign labour migration. Right-wing UMP was concerned about the slowdown in French economic growth and subsequent increase in unemployment (Interview with the current French prime minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016), therefore arguing for more selective approach to immigration, focusing on the attraction of highly skilled immigrants instead of low-skilled or family migrants. Selective immigration policy was introduced to prevent the inflow of low skilled migration from non-EU countries to France, as it could not add to the already existing high levels of unemployment in French suburbs. The 2005 riots in French suburbs highlighted the socio-economic deprivation of those areas. Sarkozy introduced his selective immigration approach in 2006, focusing on the increase in highly skilled labour migration that would benefit the economy:

In 2005, the French economy does not behave well, we already have massive unemployment [...] The economy does not function well and if we continue with the open immigration, we will not be able to give jobs to immigrants as much as we did in 1960s. In 1961-1964 many immigrants from Magreb countries came to France. But back then we had economic growth, job growth and housing. In 2005 we did not have growth, we do not have housing or jobs. And this was the reason why we needed to slow down immigration. (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016).

The right-wing UMP maintained restrictive control of the non-EU labour migration, opening a small availability (thirty) of positions in different regions of France, while the list for the citizens of new EU member states was five times bigger (Fédération National des Travaux Publiques, 2008). After the 2005 and 2007 Eastern enlargements, France

imposed temporary transitional controls for labour migration from new EU member states (Drew and Siskandarajah, 2007) because it was worried about the impact of uncontrolled labour from these countries on unemployment and on the French labour market. Such restrictive policies towards non-EU migrants are explained by the logic of limiting unwanted labour migration, including posing restrictions to the citizens of newly joined EU countries to access French labour market (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016). In order to increase highly skilled non-EU migration, which would be beneficial for the economic development of the country, Sarkozy introduced the card of competences and talents. However, in the period between 2007 and 2011, only 1143 such cards were delivered (Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2014), and the policy of increasing highly skilled labour migration flows from seven to fifty per cent failed because:

It addressed the non-existent problem. It is because of this we have delivered too little, because it responds to the problem that does not exist, those people who fall within the requirements of the card don't need it as they are recruited by the companies directly. (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

Furthermore, in 2011, immigration minister Claude Guéant reversed the policy and curbed non-EU students' right to stay in France to find a job upon graduation. As mentioned previously, this circular was not a result of the economic concerns about unemployment or the French labour market, it was a political move before 2012 presidential election to reduce immigration numbers (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

The analysis of the interviews has found that the global financial crisis was not used by Sarkozy to toughen immigration discourse and reframe it through social welfare lens. Family immigration was redefined through a social welfare lens, but this was not linked to the global financial crisis, which happened after the selective immigration approach was adopted by Sarkozy in 2006. Current French prime minister Edouard Philippe explained that the 2007 global economic crisis reinforced the discourse on unemployment and social security, and interrupted the implementation of Sarkozy's



selective immigration policy (Interview with the current French prime minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016). Former head of Inter-ministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini highlighted that the failure to deliver on increasing highly skilled migration was because of the arrival of the global financial crisis.

In the beginning it worked, 2007-2008, but then, I answer your question why it did not work, it is because the crisis arrived, global financial crisis. It is not that the firms don't hire foreigners any more, they don't hire at all. With global financial crisis we started to slow down, but we did want to increase labour migration. (Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016).

During his presidential campaign, Sarkozy promised to reform immigration and reinforce integration, but 2007-2008 global financial crisis interrupted the implementation of these reforms (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). According to the Directorate General of the Treasury, in 2009 France has seen the worst slowdown in its economic growth since the Second world war, with a 2.6 per cent GDP drop (Vincent, 2011: 1). The crisis led to major job losses in the period between 2008-2009 (Vincent, 2011: 1). The crisis undermined the success of this selective immigration policy as it had a negative impact on the economic situation in France, which saw an increase in unemployment and a plummeting in job growth. Finally, Global financial crisis also had an impact on the resources available for successful implementation of immigration policies, particularly integration measures (Interview with the current French prime-minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016).

Immigration becomes intertwined with welfare through the lens of non-EU family migration. The aim of selective immigration was to reduce family migration, which was, according to Sarkozy, putting a strain on the French welfare system. Particularly, the anxieties over family migration, which represents the biggest inflow in France, are linked to immigration from Muslim countries: "They come here, they don't work and they have the right to social housing, they have the right to free healthcare, they profit from the social welfare system and they do not work" (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). Hence, more restrictive requirements (salary, housing) for family migration were

adopted as part of the 2006 immigration law in order to prevent family migration that would rely on social welfare (Interview with Edouard Philippe, current French prime minister, 2016; Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). Such restrictive approach managed to get family migration down from approximately ninety to eighty-six thousand in the period from 2007 till 2010 (INSEE, 2012).

Immigration was tied to the needs of the economy and the emphasis was made on highly-skilled immigration, which would contribute to economic development. Thus, non-EU migration was strictly controlled and France also imposed restrictions on citizens of the new EU member states in an attempt to prevent the inflow of unskilled labour. Global financial crisis reinforced the discourse on unemployment and insecurity on the job market, but did not lead to the reframing of immigration through social welfare lens, which happened, when Sarkozy announced his selective immigration approach in 2006. Global financial crisis, though, posed a constraint for Sarkozy's attempts to reform immigration and integration.

#### ***6.4.5 Perceived identity anxieties about Muslims and their integration***

Identity was another causal factor that shaped French immigration policy. Perceived concerns of the public over identity triggered the change that integration policies underwent under the right-wing government and Sarkozy's presidency. In France, the politics of immigration is not only focused around the management of the inflows, but is also focused on the issue of integration: "The question of Islam, the question of identity is very important. I am drawing your attention to the fact that the often in France, when we are talking about the politics of immigration, this is not a problem, we are talking about integration" (Interview with Edouard Philippe, current French prime minister, 2016). Immigration politics in France equally concentrates on the management of the inflows as well as on the questions of identity and culture, integration (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016).

Identity concerns remain a contentious issue because of the country's colonial past, which led to many individuals from former colonies settling in France, often with their families (Schain, 2012). Decolonisation had an impact on the development of integration policy because of the relationship that France had with its former colonies (Interview with the UMP MP, 2016). After the decolonisation of French empire and the 1970s oil crisis, France experienced large inflows of family migration primarily from Muslim background (Hollifield, 2014), which was creating tensions between secular France and increasing presence of Islam on its territory. Integration policy in France is closely associated with colonialism: "current 'problems, particularly associated with *laïcité* and national integration, are a replay of echo of the colonial past. In this way, urban protest in the *banlieues* has become an extension of the Algerian War and demands for ethnic minorities to 'integrate' have been cast as a repackaged form of colonial 'assimilationist' ideology" (Chabal, 2017: 71). Evolution of the French integration policy is effectively focused on the French citizens of immigrant origin, on those living in French suburbs (*banlieues*), and on those, who are French, but don't feel accepted by the French society, either economically or culturally:

Of course, the problem is not 200, 000 immigrants that arrive every year, rather the problem is 5-6 million of people in France, whose grandparents were immigrants, but they are now French, but they have a problem with national identity. [...] The problem is not the foreigners, it is the French that are not assimilated. (Interview with the current French prime-minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016).

Despite being a multicultural country, France rejects multiculturalism and expects immigrants to integrate in French society by adhering to the values of the Republic. In France the debate around integration is influenced by the colonial past and is calibrated by the issue of Islam and danger that it poses to the French national identity, a concept that does not have one established definition, especially considering France's diverse immigration background. The fear of Islam and its presence in France was driving Sarkozy to toughen integration policies (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). Changes in French integration policy are driven by the concern of the French about the

disappearance of national identity, about the invasion of foreign cultures, which is represented through the lens of Islam:

The French society is afraid. It is afraid to be invaded, it is afraid to recognise itself (*de se reconnaître*), it is afraid to lose its identity and all these fears crystallise through the question of Islam nowadays. (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

The incompatibility between Republican values and Islam led to the numerous debates on integration of Muslims into French society, including contentious debates on headscarves and full veils. In 2003, Stasi Commission, which was set up to investigate the situation with wearing headscarves in public schools, concluded that there is a need to create legal framework that will regulate the situation (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016), which later led to the adoption of the law on prohibition of religious symbols in public schools. The fears about the erosion of French national identity led to the launch of the debate on national identity in 2009, which was halted shortly after because of public disapproval, but which triggered the adoption of the 2010 law on the coverage of the face in public. Thus, identity anxieties combined with the public opinion on the issue led to the adoption of more restrictive policies towards cultural integration of Muslims in France.

However, Sarkozy only targeted cultural integration, by reinforcing the Republican values of *laïcité*, and has not focused on addressing economic integration. Economic integration aims to incorporate people into French society by erasing discrimination of immigrants and the French of immigrant origin, creating opportunities for achieving better educational results, decreasing unemployment and increasing wages. Socio-economic deprivation in the French suburbs came to the forefront of the French political agenda in 2005, when violence erupted in Parisian suburbs. Even though the violence was a direct response to the accidental electrocution of two teenagers of immigrant origin, who were running away from the police, more generally it highlighted the social exclusion, discrimination and inequality experienced by residents of the *banlieues*, who are by and large of immigrant and working-class origin (Beaman, 2017: 57). These riots led to the

evolution of integration policy and triggered an important change in Sarkozy's integration approach, shifting it from an anti-discrimination to an equal opportunities paradigm. However, this change in approach erased an important legal instrument of punishment of those who were discriminating, and it did not give equal opportunities for immigrants. The change in Sarkozy's integration discourse after 2005 riots aimed to draw away attention from discrimination to equal opportunities:

Nicholas Sarkozy closes the only public institution in charge of discrimination - FASILD (*Fonds d'action et de soutien pour l'intégration et la lutte contre les discriminations*) and proposes to create the institution that will focus on the notion of equal opportunities [...] which is not attached to legal framework, meaning that in case of discrimination you cannot sentence anyone. (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016).

As the head of the Office in charge of integration during Sarkozy's presidency, Marie-José Bernardot highlighted that the lack of political will to properly finance the integration budget was an obstacle to developing integration (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016). Furthermore, the absence of the right-wing's political will to address economic integration was linked to a fear of losing the public on the issue (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016). While it is more pleasant to show the electorate that on cultural integration we have toughened the rules (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016), it is more politically risky to address economic integration. Sarkozy's approach focused on cultural integration, but neglected socio-economic integration in socially deprived areas with high immigrant concentration. Despite the promise and the introduction of equality opportunities approach, the improvement with economic integration is not felt by the residents in those areas (Chrisafis, 2015). On the contrary, 'between 2008 and 2011 the gap widened between unemployment rates in "sensitive urban zones" and in surrounding areas' (The Economist, 2013). Therefore, Sarkozy's aim to improve socio-economic integration was only present on the level of discourse, but lacked the political will to improve the actual situation in the *banlieues*.

Even though the timeframe of this research is limited to the end of Sarkozy's presidency, it should be said that identity concerns were reinforced on the agenda of the leftist government of former French president Francois Hollande between 2012 and 2017. With the terrorist attacks on France in 2015 and 2016, the integration debate in France acquires a new security dimension. It poses questions about the success of integration, the integration of the descendants of French immigrants, who were born and brought up in France, but who are attacking French republican values, not foreigners, but French (Interview with the current French prime minister, Edouard Philippe, 2016; Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, 2016). It signals the failures of integration of the French of immigrant origin, in terms of both cultural and economic integration. Anti-Islam attitudes are being reinforced through the security lens and identity and integration discourse in France continues to be focused on Islam.

Perceived anxieties of the public about integration of Muslims of immigrant origin led the right-wing UMP to pursue more restrictive integration discourse and policies. The incompatibility between Islam and the Republican principle of *laïcité* drove the integration debate to the right. Sarkozy managed to defend *laïcité* by targeting cultural integration and prohibiting the wearing of headscarves in public schools and the wearing of full veil public. Yet, he did not have a political will to address the other republican principle of equality, by focusing on economic integration of immigrants and creating equal opportunities for immigrants and French of immigrant origin (Interview with Frederic Callens, former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, 2016; Interview with Marie-José Bernardot, former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, 2016). This demonstrates that Sarkozy's approach towards integration was focused on adopting more restrictive stance towards cultural practices, but did not aim to improve economic integration, because that would undermine his restrictive discourse on management of the inflows (Interview with a former head of the

Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016).

## **6.5 Causal mechanisms**

Having explained the causal factors that led to the evolution of Sarkozy's immigration stance, it is equally important to elaborate on mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change. This research has found that two mechanisms allowed Sarkozy and his party to make immigration policy in France more restrictive. The first mechanism is framing, which concentrates on the argumentation of the positions on immigration, which is necessary for every political party to justify its position on the issue. Framing explains how these causal factors feature in the framing of immigration issue in Sarkozy's rhetoric. The second mechanism is a procedural one, which focuses on the implementation of the ideas into policies and is institutional reshuffle architected by Sarkozy, which led to departmental competition. Since in France, the president is the one who defines the policy direction, it was Sarkozy who initiated several institutional reshuffles and established new political structures, which resulted in immigration and integration policy change and also accounted to the gaps between policy demands and policy outcomes.

### **6.5.1 Framing**

During the last ten years the right-wing was in office, Sarkozy and his party had toughened their immigration stance. There has been a change in the framing of immigration before the 2007 presidential elections and toward the end of Sarkozy's presidency. In general, the rhetoric had shifted from the limitation of certain inflows to the limitation of overall immigration numbers. Thus, framing of family migration through a social welfare lens was aimed at justifying a more restrictive approach to family reunification, which was the biggest inflow in the country that Sarkozy wanted to reduce. He attributed blame to family migrants for putting pressure on the economy. Sarkozy's diagnostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) identified family migrants as unwanted immigration because of the pressure they were perceived to place on economy and social welfare. This diagnostic framing, which attributed blame to

immigrants, was a justification for more restrictive immigration policies towards family migrants, and amounted to the framing of family migration a social welfare lens. Sarkozy framed socio-cultural issue of family migration through an economic lens, blaming family immigrants for putting a strain on social welfare system and making insufficient efforts to integrate. Hence, Sarkozy's prognostic framing (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) proposed to increase financial requirements and introduce mandatory integration for family members in the form of the CAI.

Another example of the change in immigration discourse refers to the highly skilled labour migration. While before 2007 presidential election Sarkozy framed highly skilled labour migration as beneficial for economic growth, such discourse disappeared before 2012 presidential election. With the strong presence of the radical right FN, Sarkozy feared defection of his electorate to Marine Le Pen before the 2012 presidential election. Towards the end of his presidency, Sarkozy substantially changed his framing on immigration, by diagnosing that not only should family migration be restricted, but that numbers of legal migration inflows in general were too high. One of his 2012 electoral pledges proposed to cut immigration in half, from 200,000 to 100,000 a year (Sarkozy, 2012). This was done to show commitment to reducing immigration with the aim of recuperating Le Pen's electorate. In order to reduce overall immigration numbers, student migration was the new target of the conservative immigration minister Claude Guéant, who framed student migration in a negative light, by arguing that studying at French universities had become a way of getting into the country for reasons other than education. Furthermore, in addition to pressure to reduce overall immigration numbers from the FN, economic anxieties that student migration posed for the French labour market, also shaped Guéant's framing of immigration. Prognostic framing of student migration included the issuance of Guéant's circular, which denied recent non-EU graduates the right stay in France in search for a job.



Framing of the integration issue was completely shaped by the issue of Islam and its presence in France (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). Sarkozy framed Islam as a threat to the values of equality and secularism, the cornerstones of the French republicanism. The emphasis on cultural integration was at the heart of Sarkozy's discourse. Prognostic framing manifested itself in the opposition to headscarves in French public schools and full veils in public places. Muslims were blamed for insufficient integration into French society, and framing of the perceived failure of Muslim communities to integrate allowed Sarkozy to reinforce concerns about the erosion of French national identity. Sarkozy's prognostic framing, which aimed to find solutions to the diagnosed problem, resulted in the launch of the national identity debate in 2009. Having discussed the argumentative mechanism of framing, the chapter now examines the second mechanism of institutional reshuffle that also led to the departmental competition. While institutional reshuffle permitted Sarkozy to fulfil some of his immigration pledges and to reshape French immigration policy in a more restrictive way, departmental competition explains why Sarkozy failed to deliver on some of his promises.

#### ***6.5.2 Institutional reshuffle and departmental competition***

Mechanisms that account for immigration policy change in the French case are not obvious. Unlike in the UK, where the Conservatives were in the Coalition government with the Liberal Democrats and unlike in Switzerland, where political decisions need to be consensual, in France the president directs policy-making if his party has a majority in the French parliament. Hence, the adoption of new immigration and integration laws between 2002 and 2012 was possible because the right-wing UMP had the majority in the parliament and there was no need to reach consensus with other political parties. Institutional reshuffle mechanism, which refers to the dissolution of certain institutions and their replacement by the new ones, or the fusion of immigration and integration politics under one institution or the separation of immigration and integration matters to the different ministries, explains how immigration and integration policy changed. While departmental competition mechanism, whose essence lies in the competition between

the various organisms that were fused within the same institution explains the occurrence of the gaps between policy demands and policy outcomes. The conflicts of interest within the fused institutions led to the resistance of ministers and staff to the implementation of new policies. Sarkozy instigated the institutional reshuffle, which was designed to achieve the implementation of his political discourse into policies. Departmental competition that followed the reshuffle explains Sarkozy's failure to deliver on his immigration and integration proposals. There were two major institutional reshuffles that were interconnected. One was with the reference to the change in integration paradigm, and another one regarding immigration policy in general.

The change in integration approach happened in 2006, when Sarkozy decided to move from anti-discrimination approach to the equality of opportunities, which was a regression because in 2006 FASILD was replaced by the new integration agency the ACSE that incorporated urban policy (*la politique de la ville*), that was responsible for social promotion (*promotion sociale*) of the French of immigrant origin, that dealt with those young people, who were integrated, but discriminated (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frédéric Callens, 2016). It took time to reform the administration and these two policies were under the authority of two different ministries - the Ministry of Urban policy and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration - with the attempt to harmonise two policies. However, between 2007 and 2009, the politics of urban policy dominated the ACSE, and ultimately took control of the budget and staff (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016). Intra-departmental competition within the ACSE partially leads to the failure of integration policy, and the importance of integration for Sarkozy leads to the re-separation of these policies. Intra-departmental competition manifested itself in the wish of every minister to have their own budget and independent decision-making powers. This made cooperation impossible and precipitated the failure of integration policy (Interview with a former head of the Office for

territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016).

Furthermore, the divisiveness of the 2009 national identity debate and the rise of the FN led Sarkozy decide to separate the integration question from the urban policy question (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frédéric Callens, 2016). As a result, integration policy was placed completely under the authority of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development, and later of the Ministry of the Interior, which is better equipped (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016; Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frédéric Callens, 2016). This institutional reshuffle led to a conflict of interest between staff from the ACSE and the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development:

This is already a loss of time because people that are in these different organisms are not very happy. Those, who come from the ACSE, they find themselves in the new organism that tell them to do things differently, to do different things and work with different methods, other objectives and other actors (Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, 2016).

The gap between Sarkozy's policy demands and policy outcomes is also explained by the fact that the question of integration policy went away from the ACSE, from the social actors, to the governmental ministry because of the tension between those who come from the ACSE and those in the Ministry. The incorporation of integration policy under the ministerial umbrella shows Sarkozy's commitment to maintaining strong immigration discourse. At the same time, however, it also hampered the effective delivery of policy outcomes. Thus, this evidences the gap between political demands and policy outcomes because the inclusion of integration policy completely under the Ministry leads to the exclusion of social actors like the ACSE from strategic planning and governance, which is necessary for the implementation of integration policy (Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frédéric Callens, 2016). Powerful integration discourse

of Sarkozy and his attempt to incorporate integration matters completely to the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development impeded the successful application of integration policy in France because of the power that the Ministry exercised over the ACSE on integration matters.

Secondly, institutional reshuffle relates to the immigration issue in general. It shows the evolution of institutions that were responsible for immigration matters and explains how such a reshuffle failed to close the gap between Sarkozy's policy demands and his policy outcomes. When Sarkozy became French president, he quickly fulfilled his electoral pledge to create the ministry that would be responsible for immigration and national identity. In 2007 the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development was created with the idea of reuniting the responsibilities of three different ministries: Ministry of Integration and Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior and Ministry of Work under one ministry (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016). This institutional reshuffle, the fusion of three ministers under the same umbrella led to considerable opposition by the ministers and their administrations, who were supposed to work together. There was a very strong resistance of each of the ministers and very strong resistance of the administrations to compromising with each other and to sharing a common budget and decision-making powers (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser; Interview with a senior civil servant and a former head of Interministerial Committee on Immigration Control, Patrick Stefanini, 2016):

So, we have made it badly, we have put all together. The administrations that have reunited in this new ministry, did not really work together. In addition, there are physical constraints as well. When the people want to work together, physical constraints do not matter. Physically people are in different ministries, but legally they are under authority of one Ministry of Immigration. And, we have not put different services in the Ministry that we should have put because there was a lot of disagreement between the ministries. The new Ministry was created, but the people did not want to work together and in three years the Ministry has been dissolved. (Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016).

Moreover, the appointment of Sarkozy's close political allies as the heads of the new Ministry - Brice Hortefeux and later on Eric Besson, who were not experts on immigration

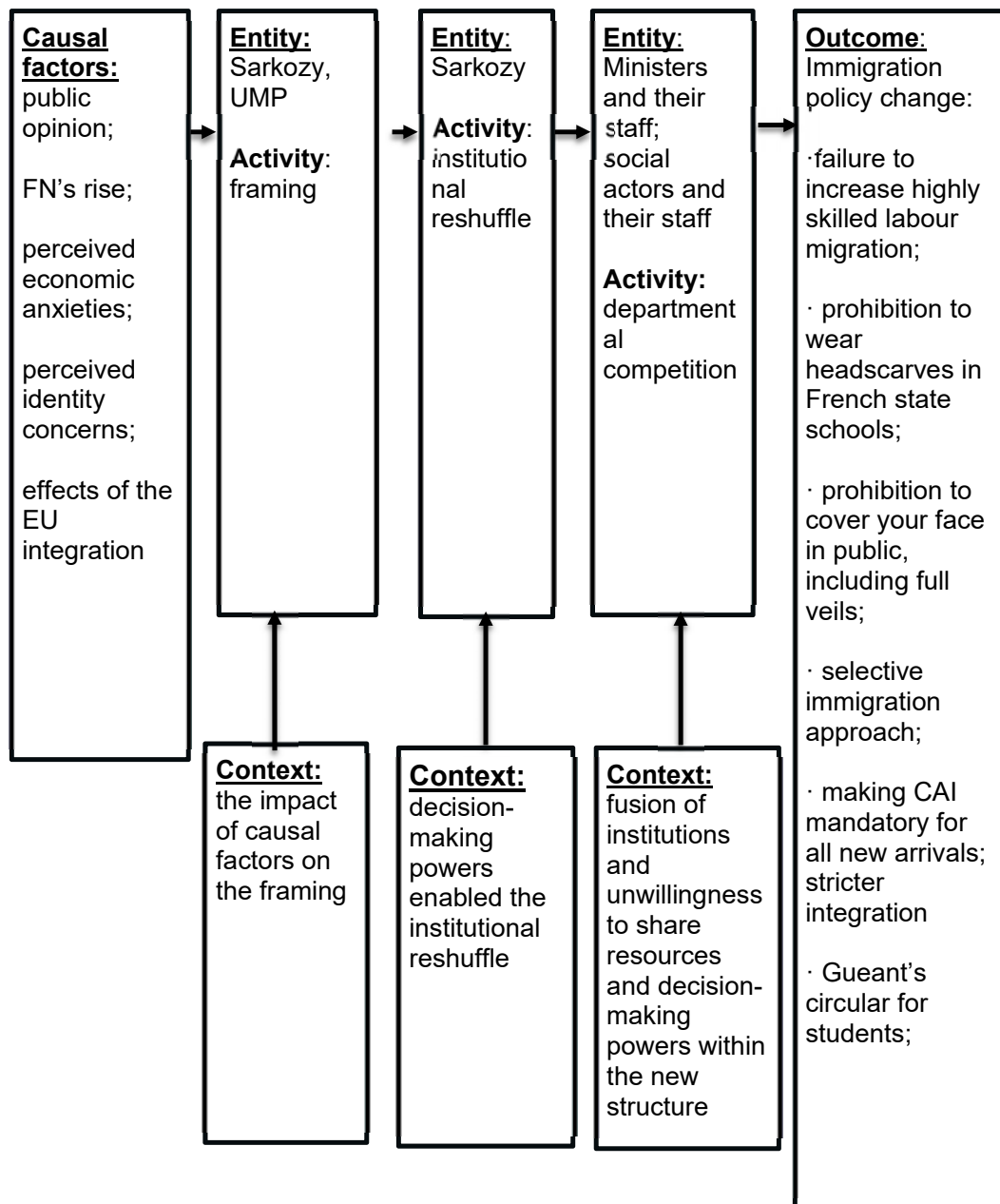


Figure 3: Causal chain of French immigration policy change

(Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, 2016) was detrimental to achieving his goals on immigration. To sum up, institutional reshuffle, which fused immigration matters originally under the authority of three ministries into one, led to departmental competition within the new organism and the weak ministers that were in charge of it led to the dissolution of the Ministry in 2010. Moreover, faced with political pressures from the electoral rise of the FN and the failure of the national identity debate led to dissolution of the Ministry in 2010. Immigration and integration matters returned under the authority of

the Ministry of the Interior. Thus, institutional reshuffle led to the departmental competition within the new institutions, which explains the gap between Sarkozy's policy demands and immigration and integration policy outcomes.

### ***6.5.3 Causal chain of the change in Sarkozy's position on immigration and evolution of French immigration policy***

Having discussed causal factors that led Sarkozy and his party to make French immigration policy more restrictive and the mechanisms that accounted for the change and also prevented Sarkozy from achieving his goals on immigration, the final part of the chapter draws a complete causal chain. It presents the explanation of immigration policy change, incorporating causal factors, mechanisms, agency and the context. Mechanisms only occur where there is an entity and an activity performed by this entity (Beach and Pedersen, 2008: 30) and the activation of the mechanisms is context-dependent (Pawson, 2001: 5), therefore context affects the triggering of the mechanism.

The institutional reshuffle mechanism was activated as Sarkozy had decision-making powers that would enable him to do so, while departmental competition mechanism was a result of institutional reshuffle, created an unfruitful context for cooperation between fused institutions, as the actors within new organisations resisted sharing resources and decision-making powers and accounted for the gaps between Sarkozy's policy proposals and policy outcomes.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

Immigration policy in France between 2002 and 2012 underwent a considerable transformation, tightening family migration, redefining integration policy by prohibiting the wearing of headscarves in public schools and full veils in public, and creating tougher conditions for student migration. This change started when Sarkozy was the minister of the Interior, a position which he used as a platform for his candidacy for the 2007 presidential elections. He adopted an accommodative strategy towards the FN and the salience of immigration remained high under his presidency.

Four causal factors underpinned the logic of Sarkozy's immigration position and subsequent policy change. Out of five hypotheses that were tested, four were confirmed. First, the hypotheses that public opinion was instrumental, especially with regard to the redefinition of integration policy was confirmed. Clearly, there is a two-way relationship with Sarkozy trying to influence the public opinion on immigration, but also the importance of public attitudes driving this change. Public opinion was also reflected in the increasing support for the radical right FN, which was another factor that underpinned the toughening of Sarkozy's immigration discourse and policies. Second, the hypothesis on anxieties about national identity, integration and Islam was also confirmed, demonstrating that identity concerns contributed to the change in Sarkozy's rhetoric and led to the major changes in integration policies. The prohibition of religious symbols in public schools and the ban of full veils in public places represent Sarkozy's approach to addressing cultural integration, while socio-economic integration was ignored. Third, the hypothesis on the effects of the EU integration, which played a salient role in the security discourse, was confirmed. The effects of the EU integration emphasised the importance of the protection of the EU external border from illegal immigration from third countries. The concerns over the loss of sovereignty, namely the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and French law had an impact only on the evolution of Sarkozy's discourse, but not on policies. Finally, the hypothesis about the impact of economic anxieties on Sarkozy's position is only partially confirmed. Sarkozy's immigration stance was underpinned by the economic development. But, on the other hand, Global financial crisis did not lead to the reframing of immigration through social welfare lens. Framing family migration through welfare concerns happened, when the selective immigration approach was introduced in 2006, which preceded the Global financial crisis. This crisis, though, presented a constraint for Sarkozy to succeed in his selective immigration by expanding highly skilled labour migration because it decreased the French economic growth, which resulted in increased unemployment.

The mechanism of framing prepared fertile ground for Sarkozy to justify the subsequent change in immigration policy. It is a mechanism that precedes the decision-making process. The successful adoption of new immigration legislation was possible as the president had the parliamentary majority and there was no need to reach consensus with other political parties. The research identified that institutional reshuffle generated the replacement and fusion of certain institutions and actors, which, in turn, led to the change in integration paradigm and the adoption of more restrictive policy choices. The second mechanism of departmental competition acted as a constraint because it manifested itself in the opposition of actors and their administrations to cooperate and to share decision-making powers and resources. While causal factors shaped Sarkozy's framing of immigration, which highlights the importance of the structure in explaining immigration position change, the importance of agency is crucial in the cases of institutional reshuffle and departmental competition as the resistance of the actors to cooperate impeded the transformation of electoral pledges into policy outcomes. It demonstrates that not only the structure shapes the choices of the agency, but also that the agency can also be paramount in altering the structure and influencing policy outcomes.



## Chapter 7

### **The right-wing parties in power and immigration policy in comparative perspective: explaining the variation in right-wing parties' responses**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Immigration policy in France, Switzerland and the UK has been redefined as a result of a variety of exogenous factors. As the preceding chapters have demonstrated that between 2002 and 2015 right-wing parties in power in Western Europe have toughened their immigration stance, which subsequently led to the redefinition of immigration policies, introducing more restrictive rules for family, student and labour migration. While France and Switzerland have witnessed major restrictions in integration policies in the wake of a perceived threat to national identities, which were primarily focused on the integration of Muslims in those societies, identity anxieties did not underpin the logic of immigration policy change of the British Conservatives. The importance of immigration as a policy priority for these parties has resulted in major changes not only for each countries' national politics, but also has had a profound impact on the international context, by producing some important critical junctures. In both the UK and Switzerland, immigration policy change led to critical junctures such as the referendum on Brexit and the Initiative Against Mass Migration. In the UK, the Conservative Party agreed to a public referendum on exiting the European Union (the 'Brexit' referendum) partly as a response to public concerns about immigration and the EU and the perceived impact on the UK as a whole, but also as a response to growing Euroscepticism within the party itself. In Switzerland, immigration anxieties of the SVP led to the acceptance of the Initiative Against Mass Migration, which almost brought back an old quota system for immigration and threatened the Swiss relationship with the EU as it undermined the free movement of people principle. At the same time, France introduced the ban of headscarves in French state schools and a burqa-ban in public places, signalling a u-turn in the French integrationist approach during Sarkozy's era. Furthermore, the salience of immigration increased as a result of the arrivals of refugees by sea, which had an impact on the free movement of people, temporary closing the borders between

Denmark and Sweden in autumn 2015. Some countries, like Hungary, opted for the construction of fences with other countries, including Serbia, to prevent the inflow of illegal immigration. Terrorist attacks in France, Belgium, the UK and Spain have reinforced the security aspect of immigration as some terrorists were of immigrant origin. The United States of America have not been immune to the immigration issue either, which has been politicised by Trump during his presidential campaign and during his presidency. With immigration becoming a top issue on the political agenda in Europe and beyond, it is crucial to explain what drives right-wing parties in power to toughen their immigration stances, as it blurs the boundaries between right-wing parties and their radical right competitors, signalling the revival of exclusionary nationalism (Inglehart and Norris, 2017; Guiraudon, 2017; Lequesne, 2016).

The empirical chapters of this thesis traced the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies in all three cases and the analysis of these cases suggests that the causes of immigration policy change are broadly similar. However, the way these narratives are used by the three right-wing parties in power differs and remains largely context-dependent. On the surface, this means that the rhetoric of the UK Conservative Party, the UMP and the SVP has become increasingly anti-immigration, with a sort of shared attitude towards restricting immigration. Yet in practice, the perspectives on dealing with immigration concerns in the three cases remain distinct and different. This chapter offers insights into why this is the case. This chapter is in essence an amalgamation of all the findings from the three empirical chapters, bringing the findings together in a comparative framework for the first time in the thesis. Apart from comparing the findings, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate if the proposed hypotheses that were set out in the theory chapter were confirmed or falsified and how the findings of this research add to the theories of party policy change and to POS theory.

The goal of this research was not simply to explain the outcome of immigration position change in three cases, but to make a contribution to the broader literature on why parties

change their policy stances, in other words, to offer certain generalisations. As process-tracing is limited in producing generalisations to other cases because it is only able to draw within-case inferences, a comparative case study framework overcomes this limitation, and, by comparing these inferences, can provide grounds for explanations beyond a particular case. This is the added value of the comparative case study approach, which is crucial not only for theory testing, but also for theory refinement, examining accounts for differences and similarities in three cases. The comparative case study is a useful tool for overcoming the limitations of generalising from qualitative research. Furthermore, with regard to mechanisms, quantitative research is only useful if established indicators exist for the hypothesised mechanisms. Direct observation of novel mechanisms requires a qualitative approach. Comparing mechanisms can highlight the conditions under which some mechanisms are likely to occur, while others do not. To sum up, comparison is crucial for offering grounds for generalisation and for theory refinement because it explains what accounts for the variation in three cases.

## **7.2 Causal factors: similarities and differences across three cases**

This research has investigated which exogenous factors have led right-wing parties in power to change their positions on immigration, and subsequently to change immigration policies. Six hypotheses, which outlined the factors, were based on theories of party policy change, were tested in all three cases. These hypotheses were constructed and tested with the elite interview data.

**H1:** Party competition on the right, or more specifically, the presence of strong radical right competitor leads right-wing parties in power to adopt an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards their rivals and go hard line on immigration<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> It should be noticed that in Swiss chapter the hypothesis about the impact of party competition is absent as in Swiss case, there was no credible competitor for the SVP that would be further to the right in the Swiss political spectrum.

Table 5: Causal variance across three cases				
Country	UK	Switzerland	France	Political opportunity structures
Public opinion shifts	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Party competition	Yes	No	Yes	Radical right's presence POS
Effects of the EU integration	Yes	Yes	No	Relationship with the EU POS
Perceived concerns over economic development	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Perceived identity anxieties of the public	No	Yes	Yes	Citizenship regime POS
Home Office's ideological dogmatism	Yes	No	No	Agency-related factor
Influence of interest groups	Yes	-	-	

**H2:** Right-wing parties in power pursued restrictive immigration stance as a response to shifts in public opinion on the issue, which became more negative over the years.

**H3:** Perceived identity concerns of the public about the threat from Islam and integration of Muslims resulted in the introduction of more restrictive policies in integration domain.

**H4:** Perceived economic anxieties of the public over immigration over unrestricted EU immigration were at the origins of the changing approach to immigration.

**H5:** 2007-2008 global financial crisis underpinned more restrictive approach of the three right-wing parties in power on immigration and led right-wing parties in power to reframe immigration through social welfare lens.

**H6:** The effects of the EU integration and widening of the EU community made the right-wing parties in power to pursue a more restrictive immigration stance.

Table 5 demonstrates if the hypotheses about the causes of immigration policy change were confirmed or falsified in each of the cases and also point to the differences and similarities across the cases in terms of factors that lead to immigration policy change. The table also contains POS theory, which explains the variation in the factors, identifying specific attributes of national POS that account for absence or presence of these factors. Furthermore, the table points out the limitations of the theories that focus on exogenous factors by highlighting two additional causal factors that led to immigration policy change in the UK case: Home Office's ideological dogmatism and the influence of interest groups, which are agency-related factors. Finally, the following table raises the question of whether these explanations were applicable or consistent across the three case studies or different? Are there similarities that can be drawn out?

The discussion around the findings presented in this table starts with the presence or absence of the factors that were outlined in the hypotheses, then it proceeds with the identification of the new agency-related factors that were identified by the elite interview data and finishes with the explanation of the variation of the factors across the cases by specifying how POS theory explains that variation.

#### *Public opinion shifts*

The analysis of the three cases demonstrated that public opinion was an important exogenous factor for three right-wing parties in power and had an influence on their changing immigration stances. These findings confirm the hypothesis that argued that public opinion is a factor that leads parties change their policies and support the theory

(Adams et al., 2004; Meyer, 2013) that parties change their policy positions when opinion starts to shift away from the party. UMP, the Conservative Party and the SVP reacted to toughening of public opinion on the issue and altered their policy positions in a more restrictive manner to prevent the alienation of their electorates. Thus, public opinion was the backbone of the Conservative's immigration policy-making during Coalition government. The Home Office and the Conservatives wanted to reassure the public in their strong attachment to the net migration target of 'tens of thousands', which underpinned the logic of majority of immigration policies under the Coalition government. For the SVP public opinion was important, but it was not exactly driving the immigration policy change as the SVP has had a strong anti-immigrant and anti-EU stance, which did not go in line with the public opinion, which supported the free movement of people and its subsequent extensions. However, public opinion was crucial for the SVP in launching the Initiative Against Mass Migration in 2011, when the attitudes of the public towards the free movement of people changed. Finally, the respect of the result of the Initiative on Expelling Criminal Foreigners (Implementation), which was rejected by the voters, demonstrates that the SVP takes into account public opinion and is not intending to toughen the legislation after losing the Initiative. Finally, in the French case, public opinion was crucial first, in toughening integration policies, particularly the integration of Muslims and, second, led to the u-turn on immigration policy, forcing Sarkozy to dissolve the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development, halt the 2009 national identity debate and modify Guéant's circular, by lifting restrictions on foreign non-EU graduates.

### *Party competition*

The findings of this research confirm the hypothesis that parties, and particularly right-wing parties change their policies, when there is a presence of a strong radical-right competitor (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Akkerman, 2012; Downs; 1957, Sides and Citrin; 2007). However, this hypothesis was confirmed in two cases: France and the UK, and was not tested in the Swiss case, where there is no credible competition for the SVP

from other radical parties. The electoral growth of radical right parties in France and in the UK led right-wing parties in power in these countries to toughen their respective immigration policy stances by adopting an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards their radical right competitors. Even though the initial conditions were different in two cases, meaning that France has already experienced a presence of the FN's candidate in the 2002 presidential election, which shocked the French political establishment, in the UK UKIP only started to emerge as a competitor after 2010 (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). The change in rhetoric and in policies shows that Sarkozy and the Conservative party were worried about defection of their electorate to radical right parties. In France such shifts can be seen to have taken place after 2002 presidential election, at the time of Chirac administration, when Sarkozy was appointed as the Minister of the Interior. In the UK, a more restrictive character of the Conservative Party rhetoric appeared before 2010 general election and was translated into restrictive immigration policies under the Coalition government. Finally, in Switzerland party competition on the right was not a driver of SVP's restrictive immigration stance as the party did not have a credible radical right competitor, which would alienate party's votes.

#### *Effects of EU integration*

One of the theories focusing on exogenous factors argued that parties change their policies as a response to the wider socio-economic changes in a political environment (Fagerholm, 2015). In this research these changes were operationalised through the EU integration and its effects (Geddes, 2003). The analysis of the elite interview data indicated that the hypothesis about the effects of EU integration, which led right-wing parties in power to change immigration policies in a more restrictive direction, was confirmed in two cases: in Switzerland and in the UK. Comparison of the three cases demonstrated that the effects of the EU integration played different roles in the UK, Switzerland and France, and that they only led to immigration policy change in Switzerland and in the UK, but not in France. In the UK, the effects of EU integration manifested themselves in the lack of control over EU migration, which increased as a

result of the EU enlargements, that were not followed by the introduction of transnational agreements with the new EU member states led the UK Conservative Party to adopt a tougher position on immigration. In the Swiss case, enhanced Europeanisation of the Swiss immigration policy, which manifested itself through the effects of the free movement of people, underpinned SVP's hard-line Eurosceptic position. This eventually led to the launch of the Initiative Against Mass Migration, which aimed to restrict immigration from within the EU and regain control of it. Furthermore, not only economic effects of the EU integration led the conservative parties to redefine their immigration stances, but also legal ones. In particular, the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and the national laws of Switzerland and the UK were leading the Conservative Party and the SVP to push for tougher immigration stance and the relationship between these countries and the EU. It led to the critical juncture in British politics – a referendum on exiting the EU, which resulted in a majority vote to leave the EU (commonly referred to as Brexit). This finding supports the theoretical suggestion (Fagerholm, 2015) that political parties react to crucial socio-economic changes, but also develops it further, pointing that such big-scale changes like widening of the supranational EU can lead to the critical junctures in immigration policy and beyond. This research brings added value to the literature on party policy change not only by operationalising changes in the broader political environment, but also points out that these changes have a considerable impact on the national immigration policy making (in the case of Switzerland and the UK). The analysis of Sarkozy's immigration approach between 2002 and 2012 suggests that effects of EU integration were not a causal factor behind more restrictive immigration policies as EU immigration has not been a concern for France since the enlargements. While certain anxieties about the free movements of persons manifested themselves in the reinforced security discourse around the external borders of the EU. These concerns only had an impact on Sarkozy's immigration rhetoric, but did not translate into more restrictive immigration policies.



### *Perceived concerns over economic development*

The hypothesis, which emphasised the importance of perceived economic concerns (Citrin et al., 1997; Burns and Gimpel, 2000; Malhorta et al., 2013; Mayda, 2006) of the public on immigration was confirmed in all three cases and led to toughening of immigration policy positions of right-wing parties in power. Aiming to control intra-EU migration from poorer Eurozone countries, the Conservatives redefined EU immigrants' access to some of the welfare benefits from universal to residence-based. The findings revealed that the Conservative Party hardened its immigration policy because of unrestricted EU immigration. Similarly, in France, economic anxieties about the cost of family reunification, which remains the largest immigration inflow. Sarkozy's support for strict controls for non-EU labour migration was underpinned by the fears that the French economy would struggle if an open immigration approach was adopted and that increased migration will import unemployment. Finally, in Switzerland economic concerns linked to unlimited EU migration underpinned SVP's logic on immigration policy change.

### *The impact of the global financial crisis*

The findings from three cases demonstrate that the hypothesis that right-wing parties in power changed their immigration policies as a response to the global economic change (Adams et al., 2009), which was operationalised through global financial crisis in this research was disconfirmed in all three cases. Furthermore, the second part of the hypothesis, which argued that global financial crisis led to the reframing of immigration through social welfare lens was also disconfirmed in all the cases. In France global financial crisis was not the cause behind Sarkozy's logic on limiting immigration inflows, as more restrictive immigration approach towards family reunification preceded the crisis. Global financial crisis prevented the implementation of Sarkozy's selective immigration approach because of economic difficulties on the labour market and high unemployment rates. In France, the crisis explained the gap between Sarkozy's policy

demands and policy outcomes. In Switzerland global financial crisis *per se* did not have an impact on the SVP's logic of immigration-policy making, but the combination of the effects of EU integration combined with the global financial crisis, which led to the increased migration from EU members that were more affected by the crisis, with the concerns about the free movement of people, produced a more restrictive policy stance, which eventually led to the Initiative Against Mass Migration. Finally, the analysis of the interview data in the UK case demonstrated that global financial crisis was used in a public discourse to stress the importance of redefining EU immigrants' access to some of the welfare benefits from universal to residence-based, but, as Conservative Party politicians confided in private conversation, it was more a sign of a conservative ideology, that aimed to limit welfare for everyone, not just foreigners, rather than an effect of the global financial crisis.

#### *Perceived identity anxieties*

The findings of this research indicate that perceived identity concerns of the public on immigration (Brader et al., 2008; Citrin et al., 1990; Luedtke, 2005; McDaniel et al., 2011; McLaren, 2001; Sides and Citrin, 2007) underpinned the logic of right-wing parties in power in Switzerland and in France, confirming the hypothesis in these two cases and rejecting it in the case of the UK, where this did not happen. Findings from the French case demonstrate that Sarkozy's position on integration was driven by the perceived fear of Islam as a threat to French national identity, therefore pushing for enhanced assimilation of Muslims into the French society. Anxieties about Islam led Sarkozy to introduce two major integration policies. First, in 2004 the prohibition of religious symbols in French state schools and then the introduction of the so-called 'burqa ban', which prohibited covering the face in public places in 2010. Similarly, concerns about the so-called 'Islamisation' of Switzerland were one of the factors that led the SVP to argue for tougher integration requirements. Such rhetoric was primarily directed against Muslims and later translated into a policy change. Using the instruments of direct democracy, the party launched the Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets in 2009, which was supported by the majority of the Swiss population. Finally, the analysis of the interviews

found that identity anxieties did not underpin the logic of Conservatives' position change on immigration, as the party chose to build its immigration stance change primarily through the economic perspective.

*Home Office's ideological dogmatism and the role of interest groups*

In addition to the theory driven exogenous factors, this research found two agency-related factors that reinforced the UK Conservative Party's position on immigration: Home Office's ideological dogmatism and the influence of interest groups on immigration decision-making process. Despite testing factors that were structural and exogenous to the party, the analysis of the interviews found that the role of the agency cannot be disregarded. First, Home Office's ideological dogmatism was the factor that led to the evolution of British immigration policy in a more restrictive way. As explained in more detail in chapter four, agenda-setting powers and control over evidence permitted the home secretary Theresa May, who had prime-ministerial patronage, to pursue her restrictive policy stance. Second, the influence of interest groups on immigration decision-making of the Conservative Party was another factor that emerged from interview data analysis. However, some interest groups were able to exert greater influence on political parties than others. The proposals of right-wing interest group MWUK were more successful in influencing the Conservatives because they aimed to limit immigration, while those interest groups that wanted to ease certain immigration restrictions, did not manage to succeed as much as they wanted. It should be said that, originally this thesis sought to investigate the impact of various interest groups on decision-making process in all three cases, but the low response rate and refusal of the representatives from these groups to provide an interview made it impossible. Even though this research presents the findings about the impact of the interest groups on the UK Conservative Party's logic, it does not necessarily mean that in two other cases this impact is absent. Future research can fill this gap and focus on examining how interest groups enable or constrain political parties in their decision-making choices on immigration.

### **7.3 Explaining causal factor variation**

Given that causal factors have been both similar and different in three cases, immigration policies overall changed in a more restrictive direction, though with some differences within countries. It is important to point out what explains this variation in policies because it helps to identify the direction of immigration policy that other countries, which share similar characteristics, might pursue. Table Four illustrates that the UK, Switzerland and France vary in relation to three causal factors: party competition on the right, effects of the EU integration and perceived identity concerns of the public. This research explains the variation in parties' stances and immigration policies through the theory of political opportunity structures (POS), which has been previously discussed in chapter two, which describes POS as attributes of the environment in which political parties operate. POS explain what accounts for the variation in outcomes of immigration policy change, meaning why certain causal factors had an influence on right-wing parties' in power immigration stance, while others did not. As described by Tarrow (1998: 76-77) POS are attributes of the political context that influences strategies of collective actors. In other words, POS affect the behaviour of collective actors like interest groups (Princen and Kerremans, 2008: 1129), and, likewise, political parties. The choices that right-wing parties in power made in three cases do not only depend on the causal factors that influenced their decisions, but these causal factors were shaped into different narratives based on the POS pertinent to each case. This thesis has identified four attributes of POS that explain the variation in immigration policies in three countries: citizenship regime, party's attitude to the EU, strength of radical right competitor and democracy type, which explain what accounted for the differences in shaping immigration policies in the UK, Switzerland and France. While first three attributes of the national POS explain causal factor variation, democracy type refers to explaining the variation with the causal mechanisms, which is discussed further in this chapter, namely in the subsection

Table 6: Variation in political opportunity structure in three cases

Country	Citizenship regime	Party's attitude to the EU	Strength of radical right competitor	Democracy model
UK	Multicultural	Eurosceptic	From weak to rising	Parliamentary
Switzerland	Ethnic-assimilationist	Non-member/Eurosceptic	Absent	Consensus
France	Civic-assimilationist	Europhile	Strong	Semi-presidential

### 7.3.1 *Citizenship regime*

This research has found that identity anxieties underpinned the logic of immigration policy change in Switzerland and in France, while in the UK, identity anxieties were not the driver of the Conservative Party's change in immigration during Cameron's leadership. Despite both France and the UK being former colonial empires and having a substantial population of foreign origin, cultural backlash occurred in France, but not in the UK. The right-wing parties in power in France and in Switzerland were quite similar in their approach to integration, being driven primarily by anti-Muslim attitudes. The findings of this research establish that type of citizenship regime is a relevant aspect of POS that explains why in France and Switzerland identity anxieties underpinned immigration policy-making logic of the conservative parties, while in the UK it did not happen. Both Switzerland and France represent assimilationist type of citizenship regime (Guigni and Passy, 2004), while the UK belongs to a multicultural citizenship regime. Assimilationist regimes require the immigrants give up their differences and assimilate to the host country, while multicultural regimes recognise the differences of ethnic minorities (Guigni and Passy, 2004: 58-59).

Identity concerns have been central to the right-wing in France and Switzerland, which is explained with the opportunities provided by type of citizenship regime that these two countries share. Sarkozy's profoundly anti-Islam discourse and policies are explained

through the fear of Islam and the absence of separation between private and public sphere in Islam is particularly relevant to France, where the principle of *laïcité* (secularism) and equality are at the core of the republican tradition (Marthaler, 2008; Drake, 2011). The integration of foreigners and integration of the French of immigrant origin has been equally important for France as the management of immigration inflows. National identity anxieties have been driving Sarkozy's discourse and policies since 2003 until the end of his presidency and the assimilationist character of French citizenship regime provided Sarkozy with the opportunity to adopt two laws prohibiting the wearing of hijab in state schools and the wearing of burqa in public places. Undoubtedly, not only the assimilationist citizenship regime and the republican principles of equality and secularism allowed Sarkozy to pursue tough integration rhetoric, but also the growth of the FN, which has been increasing the salience of national identity for decades.

In Switzerland, identity anxieties underpinned the immigration policy logic of the SVP because ethnic-assimilationist regime presented an opportunity for the party to voice these concerns and to argue for higher levels of integration, targeting the presence of Islam in Switzerland and the integration of Muslims. However, it is important to emphasise that the identity dimension has been at the core of the SVP's ideology since the creation of the party and this partly accounts for why the identity was driving SVP's immigration policy stance. As the UK belongs to a multicultural type, which recognises diversity and does not require immigrants to assimilate and to give up their culture, multiculturalism did not present the opportunity for the Conservative Party to frame its discourse through an identity lens. Furthermore, it would undermine party's path of detoxification in order to expand its platform to a broader electorate, therefore the Conservatives balanced their rhetoric carefully not to be branded racist. Despite having a substantial part of the population from the former colonies, in the UK identity concerns were not used in the Conservative's discourse as the multicultural citizenship regime did not present an opportunity to do so without costs. The party chose to frame immigration anxieties through an economic lens instead of an identity one partly because UK's

multicultural approach to integration provided few opportunities for the party to do so without the alienation of key swing constituencies.

### ***7.3.2 Strength of radical right competitor***

While the UK Conservative Party and the UMP in France were concerned about the alienation of their electorate to radical right competitors and this resulted in the adoption of an accommodative tactic (Meguid, 2007) towards radical right, in Switzerland this did not happen. It did not occur in the Swiss case because the SVP does not have any radical right competitor. The presence of a radical right party as an attribute of the POS explains why the UK Conservative Party and Sarkozy and his party have altered their immigration stances and led to subsequent immigration policy change. However, it should be highlighted that the presence of niche party competitor does not necessarily lead to the adoption of accommodative strategy by mainstream party. In the competition between such parties, mainstream party strategy depending on the threat of the niche party and its electoral success (Meguid, 2007: 96). By adopting accommodative strategies, right-wing parties in power come closer to the so-called 'pathological normalcy', which represents the radicalisation of mainstream values, typical for radical right parties (Mudde, 2010).

In France the electoral threat from the FN has been high since 2002 when Jean-Marie Le Pen made it to the second round of the presidential election. This in part led to the tightening of immigration policy under two terms of Sarkozy being a Minister of the Interior between 2002 and 2007. Both the 2007, and, especially the 2012 presidential campaigns were centred around immigration as one of the key issues on Sarkozy's agenda. The analysis of the 2007 vote confirmed that adopting an accommodative strategy towards the FN yielded results and allowed Sarkozy to recuperate some of the FN's electorate (Mayer, 2007). In the UK, however, the radical right UKIP has not always been a credible competitor for the more mainstream Conservative Party. From 2010, when the party started to become a serious contender (Ford and Goodwin, 2014), UKIP's threat had an influence on the Conservative's immigration stance and partly accounted

for the introduction of more restrictive immigration policies under the Coalition government. Furthermore, anxieties about the defection of the Conservative's electorate to UKIP forced the Conservative Party to keep its 'tens of thousands' immigration target in the 2015 general election manifesto, which was not particularly successful as UKIP managed to take almost a third of the Conservatives electorate (Murdoch et al., 2017). Despite the fact that both the UK and France have a majoritarian system in parliamentary elections, which keeps niche parties like FN and UKIP at bay, the threat that the radical right presents for the right-wing parties is voter defection. As much as the right-wing parties do not want to alienate its electorate to radical right, it also seeks to attract radical right's voters to boost its chances of winning office in competition with other mainstream parties. Furthermore, the threat from the radical right is higher in France, when it comes to the presidential election, because the competition is between the candidates, and as the 2002 and recent 2017 presidential elections demonstrated, Jean-Marie Le Pen and Marine Le Pen were able to make it to the second round and becoming the direct opponent of the mainstream candidate. This makes the right-wing parties in France particularly vulnerable to the electoral successes of radical right, especially during presidential elections. Therefore, the presence/strength of radical right competitor is a POS that explains why in France and the UK the right-wing parties adopted an accommodative strategy on immigration towards the extreme competitor, while in Switzerland this did not happen. The SVP did not have any credible radical right competitor that would endanger its electoral success, therefore this variable is irrelevant in the Swiss case.

### ***7.3.3 Relationship with the EU***

The effects of EU integration were one of the drivers behind the right-wing parties in power change on immigration, which subsequently led to the evolution of British and Swiss immigration policy, while in France anxieties about EU integration were not a major concern for Sarkozy and did not lead to the redefinition of the French immigration policy. Historically, SVP and the UK Conservative Party have been Eurosceptic parties, but their positions varied with SVP being a hard-Eurosceptic party, opposing EU in principle and



Conservatives representing a soft version of Euroscepticism, where the party opposes further European integration (Taggart and Szczerbak, 2004). However, as recent political events in the UK demonstrate, Euroscepticism within the Conservative Party and the UK is becoming more mainstream (Brack and Startin, 2015; Startin, 2015). Euroscepticism is entering right-wing politics and is not a defining feature of parties on the extreme ends of the political spectrum, it is now shared by right-wing parties, whose positions are becoming more EU wary (Conti and Memoli, 2012). The EU enlargements and the extension of the free movement of people to the new EU member states, important features of European integration, define parties' positions on the issue of immigration, which is closely connected to integration processes within the EU.

The countries' relationships with the EU sheds light on why anxieties about the EU were picked by the SVP in Switzerland and the Conservative Party in the UK, but were not exploited by Sarkozy in France. The similarity between Switzerland and the UK in terms of incorporating EU anxieties into the logic of immigration policy change is explained by Eurosceptic attitudes of the SVP and of the Conservative Party. Hard-core Euroscepticism is at the heart of the SVP's ideology, which explains constant opposition to the EU and resistance to signing more treaties with the EU as the SVP sees it as giving up Switzerland's sovereignty to the EU. While the Conservative Party does not have the same level of Euroscepticism as the SVP, anti-European sentiment within the party, which started to become divisive for the party in 1990s (Taggart, 1998: 365) and which became an official policy of the party in 1997 (Usherwood, 2013: 286), combined with an increase in negative attitudes of the public towards the EU led David Cameron to call the referendum on Britain's exit from the EU.

Both, the SVP and the Conservative Party viewed intra-EU migration through the economic lens, arguing that it does not only increase the numbers that these two countries can absorb, but also that it poses threats to their respective labour markets, by increasing the competition and suppressing the wages. In Switzerland and the UK, the

conservative parties linked EU anxieties to the economic concerns around intra-EU migration, especially during the times of Eurozone crisis, which “propelled the EU into an unprecedented phase of uncertainty” (Usherwood and Startin, 2012: 2). The SVP and the Conservative Party were driven by the numerical targets to reduce the overall migration numbers, which was not possible because of the free movement of people. This preoccupation led to major policy change in both cases: in Switzerland economic concerns about EU migration led to the Initiative against mass migration, which aimed to restrict the free movement of people from the EU, and in the UK it resulted in the referendum on the UK’s exit from the EU. Similar approach to redefining immigration policies in the UK and Switzerland was possible because of Euroscepticism, typical of the SVP and the Conservative Party presented an opportunity to incorporate concerns about the inability to control EU migration. Even though Switzerland is not part of the EU, its relationship with the EU is developed through a set of bilateral agreements. It should be said that being a member or non-member of the EU does not present a POS that determines the variation in party’s responses on immigration, it is a POS of the attitude of the party (Eurosceptic/Europhile) to the agreements between the EU and the country, is what shapes immigration policy in a respective country. The findings of this research support previous research, which argues that Eurosceptic attitudes are a result of enhanced EU integration (Taggart, 1998). Furthermore, this study refines Taggart’s (1998) findings by pointing out that Eurosceptical attitudes are not any more the defining features of the fringe parties, and that Euroscepticism has infiltrated mainstream political space with established parties voicing their anxieties.

Sarkozy’s and the UMP’s approach was different in France because the party was not characterised by Eurosceptic attitudes. On the contrary, Sarkozy viewed the EU as a platform for reinstating France’s image on the European and world scene (Drake, 2011). The party has not been immune to Eurosceptic attitudes, but it was more of a soft Euroscepticism (Usherwood and Startin, 2013: 6). UMP did have concerns about the EU, but they were smaller and their nature was different to that of the SVP’s in

Switzerland and the Conservatives' in the UK. The main anxieties about the EU were focused on the strength of the EU's external border and the influx of illegal migration of third country nationals through neighbouring countries that did not have effective controls of their borders. The absence of major economic anxieties around EU migration explains why critical junctures like Brexit or the Initiative Against Mass Migration did not occur in the French immigration policy. Managing third country migration was a priority for Sarkozy, both in terms of cultural anxieties and in terms of economic ones. The attitude of the right-wing parties to the EU in three cases, whether Eurosceptic or Europhile, is an important facet of the POS that explains why Brexit and the Initiative Against Mass Migration occurred in the UK and Switzerland, while in France the anxieties about EU were not a driver of immigration policy change.

#### ***7.3.4 Generalisation of causes***

The purpose of this research goes beyond providing three explanations for policy change, but aims to offer certain generalisations of causes that influenced the right-wing parties' positions on immigration. Even though process tracing allows one to make only within-case inferences about causes and mechanisms of policy change and does not enable one to generalise the findings to the population of cases (Bennet and Checkel, 2015), this can be overcome to a degree through comparison. As Beach and Pedersen (2013: 69) point out, generalisation to other cases or cross-case inference become possible through comparison of the findings of the cases.

This research has tested the existing theories of party policy change and the findings demonstrate that only two causal factors were present across three cases, and led to the toughening of right-wing parties' stances on immigration: shifts in public opinion and concerns over economic development, or, in other words, economic anxieties about immigration. The findings supported the theory that suggests that parties change their policies as a response to public opinion (Adams et al., 2004; Adams et al., 2006; Ezrow et al., 2011; McDonald and Budge, 2005; Meyer, 2013). First, public opinion on immigration was the driver behind the right-wing parties' change on immigration in all

three cases, and this comparative finding which was consistent across all three cases allows us to suggest that public opinion might be a driver of policy change in other cases. It should be said that public opinion does not only affect the strategies of political parties, but that it is affected by the political parties as well (Page and Shapiro, 1983: 188). However, the goal of the study was not to explore if there is a two-way relationship, but to test the theory of the responsiveness of political parties to public opinion. As the findings indicate that three conservative parties considered public opinion when changing their immigration policies, it gives grounds to generalise that this could happen in other cases as well.

Second, concerns over economic development linked to immigration underpinned the Conservative's, Sarkozy's and the SVP's logic of introducing more restrictive immigration stance. Both in Switzerland and in France the development of immigration policy has been largely dependent on the country's economic situation and tied to the needs of the economy. Economic anxieties were primarily linked to the effects of EU integration like the free movement of people, which did not pose any restrictions on EU migration. In less advantageous economic times, like during the global financial crisis, all three parties argued that increased migration from poorer Eurozone countries was detrimental to the labour markets because it contributed to the unemployment levels and suppression of wages. The findings of this research support theoretical propositions, which view opposition to immigration through economic lens (Adams et al., 2009; Citrin et al., 1997; Dustmann and Preston, 2001; Haupt, 2010; Hibbs, 1997; Garret, 1998; Mayda, 2006; Pierson, 2001; Ward et al., 2011) and point out that economic concerns had an influence on party's policy positions as in three cases parties considered economic anxieties of the population. These anxieties were primarily linked to low-skilled migration. Comparative findings allow us to make a cautious suggestion that conservative parties are likely to toughen immigration policies based to capitalise on voters perceptions of concerns over countries' economic development, possibly even if they are unfounded.

The variation in conservatives' logic on immigration policy-making manifested itself in three causal factors: identity concerns, the role of the EU and party competition on the right. First, the research has found that identity anxieties underpinned the logic of immigration policy change in Switzerland and in France, while this did not happen in the UK. The findings give grounds to suggest that in countries with assimilationist model of citizenship regime, right-wing parties in power would factor identity concerns into their logic of immigration policy change as assimilationist regime provides an opportunity structure for the rightist parties to justify their immigration stances. Second, party competition on the right was a driver behind toughening of the immigration position of the UMP in France and of the Conservative Party in the UK, whereas that did not occur in Switzerland. These findings allow to make certain generalisation that right-wing parties in power adopt an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007; Mudde, 2010) toward their radical right competitor when the strength of this competitor is high and there is a threat of voter defection. Finally, EU anxieties led to the redefinition of immigration policies in Switzerland and in the UK, while in France they were not the drivers of immigration policy change. These suggestions about generalisation of these drivers of immigration policy change to other cases becomes possible by accounting for three POS factors (citizenship type, party competition on the right and party's attitude to the EU), which explain the variation in parties' approaches to immigration.

#### ***7.4 Causal mechanisms: similarities and differences***

Having discussed the causes of immigration policy change in three cases, the chapter proceeds with the discussion of the mechanisms that accounted for the change. The elaboration of mechanisms is necessary because causes constitute only the explanation *why* do parties change their immigration stance, but not *how* it happens and how these choices affect policy change. Mechanisms are crucial for the understanding of the process of change because they connect the cause and the outcome, they explain what enables and what constrains political actors in making their choices dominant. First, it examines the mechanisms that were responsible for the change in each case and, second, it explains what accounted for the variation in the mechanisms of immigration

policy change in the UK, Switzerland and France. Process tracing established that framing, as one of the previously theorised mechanisms (Snow and Benford, 1998; Faletti and Lynch, 2009; Rydgren, 2003) occurred in all three cases, while departmental competition and direct democracy (Afonso, 2005; Afonso, 2013; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2015; Papadopoulos, 1997) emerged as a result of the data analysis and their presence varied from case to case. Hampshire and Bale (2015) arrived at a similar conclusion in their research about the impact of political parties on immigration policy, but they labelled departmental competition as intra-coalition dynamics and interdepartmental conflict. Some mechanisms that appear from the analysis provided bring the added value to the research on causal mechanisms, by identifying two mechanisms that were responsible for immigration policy change, namely departmental competition and direct democracy. In addition to framing, that has been previously established as a discursive mechanism (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201; Rydgren, 2003), this research has identified two new mechanisms that explain how political parties translate their choices into policies. Thus, departmental competition, found as a mechanism in the case of the UK and France, and direct democracy in the case of Switzerland, are procedural mechanisms that can be tested in other cases that examine policy changes. Table Seven presents the mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change in three cases and points to the type of democracy opportunity structure, which explains the variation in mechanisms across the cases.

Table 7: Variance of causal mechanisms in three cases			
Category	UK	Switzerland	France
Framing	Yes	Yes	Yes
Departmental Competition	Yes	No	Yes
Direct Democracy	No	Yes	No

#### 7.4.1 UK

Framing was a mechanism that the Conservative Party used to justify the change in its immigration policy positions. Through diagnostic framing (Rydgren, 2003; Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201), the party attributed blame for social problems to immigrants, while prognostic framing (Rydgren, 2003; Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) represented the adoption of a more restrictive immigration stance. Apart from the Conservative Party, other actors were involved in framing immigration in a negative light. The Home Office and the right-wing interest group MWUK, which pressured the party to pursue a tougher immigration approach was also responsible for restrictive immigration framing. The Conservatives did not increase the salience of a socio-cultural cleavage over the economic one, but reframed one through the lens of another. Immigration was redefined through a social welfare lens to demonstrate to the voters the importance of both immigration and economy themes for the right-wing parties in power. Departmental competition was a second mechanism that referred to the process of immigration policy-making under the Coalition government. As various governmental departments had different ideas on the essence of the British immigration policy, the ideas of those departments that had greater availability of resources, including decision-making powers and political patronage, prevailed over the other ones.

#### **7.4.2 France**

Two mechanisms accounted for the introduction of more restrictive French immigration policy under Sarkozy's presidency. Framing concentrated on the justification for the change in immigration approach. Sarkozy's framing differed during his term as Minister of the Interior and as President, depending on the context, which has also been changing. The second mechanism, which allowed Sarkozy to fulfil his electoral promises was through an institutional reshuffle, which resulted in departmental competition. This institutional reshuffle helped Sarkozy to fulfil some of his electoral promises on immigration, led to the change in integration approach, when FASILD was replaced by ACSE, when an anti-discrimination approach was replaced with an equality of

opportunities approach. Furthermore, the institutional reshuffle also led to the competition between departments, which were merged together. In the French case, departmental competition does not only shed light on why certain ideas on immigration won over the other ones, but also explains the gap between policy demands and policy outcomes. The dissolution of the Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-Development, which was the backbone of Sarkozy's 2007 immigration pledge, accounted for this gap. The resistance of ministers and their administrations to share decision-making powers and resources under the umbrella of the new Ministry explains why Sarkozy was unable to translate his electoral pledges into policies.

#### **7.4.3 Switzerland**

The SVP used framing as a discursive mechanism that allowed the party not only to popularise its immigration stance, but also to criticise the positions of the Swiss government, which is a characteristic feature of the populist parties. Framing allowed the SVP to influence immigration policy through a top-down approach, when the party was in control of the FDJP. Direct democracy, which is an idiosyncratic feature of the Swiss political system, represents a second mechanism that enabled the SVP to shape Swiss immigration policy in a more restrictive way. The inability to control the FDJP, after Blocher failed to get re-elected to the Federal Council, had an impact on the SVP's ability to define a direction of immigration policy-making through governmental routes. Furthermore, the lack of consensus between the SVP and others in the parliamentary arena led the SVP to use the instruments of direct democracy, shaping Swiss immigration policy through a bottom-up approach. The Swiss case demonstrates that even though the use of direct democracy depends on the political context, the activation of this mechanism is contingent upon the agency of political parties and other actors involved in the process of policy-making.

#### **7.5 Explaining the variation of mechanisms in three cases**

Table Seven shows that framing was present in all three cases, pointing that all three political parties used it as a justification for immigration policy change. Departmental competition was present in both French and British immigration policy making, Swiss



immigration policy change was a result of the activation of direct democratic mechanism by the SVP. While in the UK departmental competition accounted for the explanation of why certain policy choices prevailed, in France it was a result of the institutional reshuffle and shed the light on the dominance of some policy choices, but also explained the gap between Sarkozy's policy demands and immigration policy outcomes. The variation in causal mechanisms in the UK, Switzerland and France is explained through attributes of national POS that capture different types of political regimes: parliamentary, consensus democracy (Lijphart, 2012) and semi-presidentialism in France (Duverger, 1980; Elgie, 2009). Different models of democracy accounted for the occurrence of different types of mechanisms that led to immigration policy change in three cases.

Types of democracy are important in explaining the variation of mechanisms in the three cases because they account for different policy-making logics. In France, which is an archetype of semi-presidentialism (Elgie, 2009), major decisions are made by the strong president, who has the support of his party in the *Assemblée Nationale* if there is no *co-habitation* regime. Likewise, in the UK, which represents the Westminster model of democracy, executive power is usually concentrated within one party (Lijphart, 2012). Even though the Conservative Party was in the Coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, they remained a major player, retaining the majority of ministries. The logic of the executive branch's power in France and the UK is similar and decision-making powers are concentrated in the hands of a party (UK) or one powerful president (France). Therefore, in the UK, those departments that had the Prime Minister's patronage on immigration were able to pursue their ideas into policies, while in France, the institutional reshuffle that led to departmental competition was orchestrated by Sarkozy. In the UK case, departmental competition explained immigration policy change, while in France institutional reshuffle and departmental competition shed the light on both the existence of the gaps between policy demands and policy outcomes and on subsequent policy change. Finally, the Swiss political system, which is based on the consensus between political players, where power is dispersed to different actors (Lijphart, 2012: 33),

presented opportunities for another mechanism to occur. Direct democracy mechanism, which was activated by the SVP as a result of the inability to reach a consensus with other political parties led to the major changes in Swiss immigration policy. This demonstrates that POS serves as a concept that accounts for explaining the variation in mechanisms in the UK, Switzerland and France.

#### **7.4.4 Generalisation of mechanisms**

As with the causes, this research aimed at not only pointing to different causal mechanisms responsible for immigration policy change in three cases, but also to offer some suggestions about the potential presence of these mechanisms in other cases. Mechanisms are portable, meaning that they operate in different cases, but the outcome that they produce is context-dependent. This research asked what were the mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change of the right-wing parties in power and the analysis of case studies identified that previously theorised mechanism of framing (Faletti and Lynch, 2009; Rydgren, 2003) was present in immigration policy change in the UK, Switzerland and France. The findings from the three case studies demonstrated that framing was a mechanism that accounted for the argumentation of political parties in changing their positions. This discursive mechanism might be found in other cases that deal with party policy change, but its operation would be dependent on the context as the variation in the forms and outcomes of framing in the three contexts examined in this thesis demonstrated. Different models of democracy explain why departmental competition occurred in France and in the UK, while it did not occur in Switzerland, where a direct democratic mechanism was partly responsible for immigration policy change. Comparative findings give grounds to suggest that departmental competition as a mechanism is likely occur in those democracies that are not bound by consensual politics. Both parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies fall within that range. It is impossible for departmental competition to lead to the policy change in Switzerland, as the country belongs to consensus model of democracy (Lijphart, 2012), where major political decisions are the outcome of a consensus between different political actors.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

This research sought to explain what drives right-wing parties in power to change their positions on immigration and what causal mechanisms make this change possible. By comparing the UK, Switzerland and France, the chapter pointed out to the presence of the variation in causes, which are explained by several attributes of national POS. First, strength of radical right competitor, citizenship regime, country's relationship with the EU were POS that clarified why some factors underpinned the logic of immigration policy change of the right-wing parties in power, while others did not. Second, the concept of POS enables explanation of the variation in comparative case studies. The framework of causal factors that were traced in three cases can be tested in other cases of immigration policy change and beyond as some of the factors are not only applicable to immigration issue, but can be extrapolated to other policy issues as well. Finally, the research highlighted that some contextual factors that are external not only to the party, but to the country in question, like global economic change and changes in the wider political environment (widening of the EU) do not only explain the logic of policy change, but also shed the light on the occurrence of critical junctures within country's political landscape. Brexit in the UK and the Initiative Against Mass Migration in Switzerland demonstrate that factors exogenous to the country do not only produces changes in that country's domestic environment, but have implications for the wider political context, namely for country's relationship with supranational institutions like the EU.

The chapter highlighted that causes of immigration position change and subsequent policy change are mainly similar in the UK, Switzerland and France, but the way right-wing parties in power frame some of the factors into specific narratives are different, which depends on the context in which the development of immigration policy takes place. This means that even though the same causal factors led to the change in party's immigration stance, the way they were used by right-wing parties in power, the concerns they raised were different and context-dependent. The analysis of three case studies demonstrates that some causal factors are sufficient to change party's stance, but

sometimes this change is explained by conjunctural causation (Ragin, 1987: 27-28), when a combination of more than one factor is necessary to lead to the change in immigration stance of political parties.

As for the mechanisms that accounted for policy change, they can be tested in the future research that addresses policy change from political parties' perspective, to any policy issue in question. Framing was a discursive mechanism that justified immigration stance change, while departmental competition and direct democracy explained why certain policy choices prevailed and why policy gaps occurred. While some causal factors might only be applicable to particular policy areas, the situation with causal mechanisms is different as the essence of their operation is the same across cases, while the outcomes that they produce are context-dependent. POS also sheds the light on the variation in mechanisms that are responsible for immigration policy change. The type of democracy (parliamentary, consensus and semi-presidential) help to explain why departmental competition was present in the UK and France, while direct democracy mechanism, activated by the SVP, accounted for immigration policy change in Switzerland. Future research can examine if departmental competition and direct democracy are responsible for policy change in other country cases or in other policy domains.

Overall, this research highlighted that theories of party policy change examining exogenous causal factors provide an essential insight into the explanation of policy change as the factors exogenous to the party drive political parties to adjust to new changes and new challenges. Therefore, structural explanations are important, but agency also plays a critical role, as it decides which factors which factors to take into account during the decision-making process. The role of the agency is crucial for the activation of the mechanisms, even though the outcome of the mechanism is context-dependent. This study did not aim to advance the ontological discussion on the agency versus structure problem, but demonstrated that structural factors are necessary for the explanation of policy change and that attributes of POS are responsible for explaining

the variation in right-wing parties' positions on immigration and mechanisms that are responsible for the change. By tracing the external factors that influenced the right-wing parties' decision-making process, the research found one agency-related factor that was crucial in shaping British immigration policy in a more restrictive direction. The importance of Home Office's ideological dogmatism in the UK case highlights that a complete picture of party position change and subsequent policy change is possible if both dimensions are considered: structure and agency. Hence, future research can examine the role of agency in policy change, focusing on intra-party dynamics and other stakeholders that influence parties' policy stances, which will provide a more comprehensive explanation of why political parties change their policy positions.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

Right-wing parties in the UK, Switzerland and France have considerably tightened their rhetoric and immigration policies between 2002 and 2015 as a response to a variety of exogenous factors. The research asked two questions: why did right-wing parties in power change their positions on immigration and what specific mechanisms accounted for this change? By examining legal migration, which included work, student and family migration routes, the research has found that changes in public opinion and economic anxieties about immigration were two causal factors that three right-wing parties in power shared and that underpinned their logic of immigration policy change. It also found that the changing nature of parties' stances on immigration differed with regard to the effects of the EU integration, party competition on the right and identity anxieties. The research has identified three salient attributes of national POS that explain this variation: a party's attitude to the EU, the presence of strong radical right competitor and citizenship regime. As for the mechanisms, framing as a discursive mechanism was present across all three cases, while departmental competition accounted for the immigration policy change in France and the UK and the (ab)use of direct democracy by the SVP led to the evolution of the Swiss immigration policy.

The research reflected on the importance of factors external to parties in terms of their immigration policy-making. Chapter two reflected on the agency versus structure debate and examined the literature on party position change, adopting an exogenous approach, which emphasised that structural factors provide a better insight into the logic of immigration policy change than agency ones. Chapter three sketched out a comparative case study framework and elaborated on the process tracing method, which helped establish the causes and mechanisms responsible for immigration policy change. Three empirical chapters followed that delved into a discussion of the factors and mechanisms responsible for the change, while the discussion chapter compared the findings from

three cases, and reflected on what accounted for the variation in causes and mechanisms in three country cases. Explaining the variation is crucial for offering grounds for generalisation of causes and mechanisms to other cases. By highlighting what makes the approaches of right-wing parties in power to immigration different, the findings can then suggest whether certain factors or combinations of the factors can be present in particular contexts similar to those of the countries studied. The aim of this research was not limited to offering three separate explanations of outcomes, but aimed, by comparing the findings, to suggest that some of causes and mechanisms might be generalisable to the other cases.

The findings suggest that exogenous factors are crucial in explaining immigration policy change and that the explanation of this change is broadly similar in three cases, but the way these narratives are exploited by the right-wing parties in power in three country cases are different and are context-dependent. The findings suggest that exogenous factors are salient in explaining *why* the change has happened. The findings about mechanisms give grounds to suggest that framing is a discursive mechanism that enables political actors to justify their policy positions and that political parties in other cases will use it when aiming to change policies. Furthermore, the presence of the same mechanism of departmental competition, which explained policy change in France and the UK, suggests that it can be extrapolated to other cases of Western democracies, both parliamentary and semi-presidential.

### **8.1 Research findings**

This research set two main research questions. The first question asked what are the factors that accounted for immigration position of right-wing parties in power and subsequent immigration policy change. The second question thought to trace causal mechanisms that accounted for this change.

Theoretical framework of this research suggested that in order to answer these question, one needs to look at the theories of party policy change, more specifically to the theories that focus on the structural explanations, or in other words, external to the party factors.

While highlighting that factors external to a party are structuring party's policies, the theoretical underpinning of the thesis also recognises the importance of the agency, stating that while agent's choices are shaped by the structure, the latter is not immune to the actions of agency (Most and Starr, 1989). Therefore, the analysis of the data demonstrated that in each case agency could not be disregarded as it played a crucial role in producing the change. Therefore, in the French case, a lot of immigration policy change has been directly associated with the personality of Nicolas Sarkozy and in the UK case, immigration policy change has been driven by the then-home secretary Theresa May. However, accounting for the role of the agency in immigration policy change, this research focused on the factors exogenous to the party that shaped the agency's (parties') positions. Thus, highlighting the shortcomings of the agency-related explanations, this study concentrated on exploring external factors that led right-wing parties in power to change their immigration policies. The second question aimed to uncover causal mechanisms that were responsible for producing the change. The research has found that while framing as a discursive mechanism that describe the way parties felt about immigration and the ways they proposed to deal with it, confirmed the presence of this mechanism that was theorised in chapter two. However, the research also stressed the necessity to search for the mechanisms that refer to the actual policy-making process.

### *Causes*

Six hypotheses regarding the causes of immigration policy change of three right-wing parties in power were set. The following paragraphs explain whether these hypotheses were confirmed or falsified, and to what extent they support or reject theories on party policy change.

***H1:** Party competition on the right, or more specifically, the presence of strong radical right competitor leads right-wing parties in power to adopt an accommodative strategy (Meguid, 2007) towards their rivals and go hard line on immigration.*



The findings indicate that party competition on the right was a variable that led right-wing parties in power to alter their immigration stances. However, this happened only in France and the UK, where parties were threatened with the presence of strong and growing radical right. Sarkozy's increasingly restrictive stance was a response to a variety of factors, one of which was the rise of the radical right FN. Thus, in order to please the public and to some extent neutralise his radical right competitor, Sarkozy adopted an accommodative strategy that aimed to prevent the defection of his electorate to the FN. The Conservatives in the UK considerably tightened their immigration stance once in the Coalition government, as since 2010 UKIP started to emerge as a credible competitor, gaining more electoral ground (Ford and Goodwin, 2014). This hypothesis was not tested in the Swiss case as there was no competitor for the SVP that would be further to the right on immigration.

***H2: Right-wing parties in power pursued restrictive immigration stance as a response to shifts in public opinion on the issue, which became more negative over the years.***

This hypothesis was confirmed in all three cases, where parties felt the necessity to please the public on immigration, which issue salience rose significantly. An initial detoxification strategy of the Conservatives took a sharp turn as the party needed to respond to the changing of public opinion on immigration in a more restrictive direction, which started in opposition, when Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU and continued throughout the Coalition government. The idea of achieving the net migration target to please the public was a backbone of the Conservative's immigration policy between 2010 and 2015. In Switzerland, SVP's restrictive immigration stance was a response to increasing public attitudes, which had also become more radical over the years influenced by SVP's propaganda campaigns, which demonstrates a two-way relationship between the SVP and public opinion on immigration. The SVP successfully employed this strategy, which was demonstrated by the acceptance of some of their prominent initiatives related to immigration and integration. Finally, in France, Sarkozy adopted a more restrictive integration stance in particular, which led to the introduction of policies

that targeted Muslim population in France. However, in the French case, public opinion was also important in making immigration policy less restrictive, which was shown with a reference to student migration.

***H3: Perceived identity concerns of the public about the threat from Islam and integration of Muslims resulted in the introduction of more restrictive policies in integration domain.***

Comparative findings show that identity concerns were an underlying factor that led to immigration policy change in France and Switzerland, while in the UK, Conservative Party did not use this factor in their attempt to toughen immigration policies. Sarkozy's tougher stance concerned both the management of the inflows and Muslim integration, which remained a crucial block of the French immigration policy. Perceived identity anxieties of the public on immigration, which manifested themselves in the fear of Islam, underpinned the logic of integration policy change and led to the introduction of the laws that targeted the female Muslim population in the expression of their religion. Sarkozy's approach focused on cultural integration, while failing to target the socio-economic integration of migrants. Identity anxieties over the perceived Islamisation of Switzerland, which had been constantly present in the SVP's rhetoric, were a salient factor that shaped Swiss immigration policy in a more restrictive direction. These perceived identity concerns of the public were successfully translated into the Initiative Against the Construction of the Minarets in 2009 and continued to dominate the SVP's rhetoric, with the party having launched a new anti-Islam initiative, which prohibits the covering of faces in public places. In the UK the hypothesis was falsified as the Conservative Party opted to toughen immigration policy through the economic lens and the multicultural citizenship regime hindered the reframing of immigration through identity lens.

***H4: Perceived economic anxieties of the public over immigration were at the origins of the changing approach to immigration.***

The findings reveal that this hypothesis was confirmed across all three cases, highlighting the importance of the economic concerns of the public, which, though,

referred to different types of migration in each case. Thus, the Conservative's tough stance on immigration has been a response to the labour market anxieties, brought by unrestricted intra-EU migration. Aiming to limit the labour market concerns, the party redefined the access of the EU migrants to benefits from universal to residence-based. Similarly, in Switzerland, unlimited intra-EU migration that became possible with the free movement of people had an impact on SVP's immigration stance and resulted in a major critical juncture - the Initiative Against Mass Migration, which aimed to limit uncontrolled migration from the EU. In France economic anxieties were also crucial for Sarkozy, but they were primarily linked to non-EU family migration, which remained the largest immigration inflow.

***H5:** 2007-2008 global financial crisis underpinned more restrictive approach of the three right-wing parties in power on immigration and led the parties to reframe immigration through social welfare lens.*

This hypothesis was falsified in all the three cases. In the UK context austerity was not at the heart of the redefinition of immigration through social welfare angle. In public discourse the Conservatives framed the introduction of more restrictive policies for immigrants as a result of the austerity, but the analysis of the interview data revealed that this was done only to please the public. Global financial crisis was not the underlying causes behind the more restrictive immigration rhetoric and policy changes as SVP's stance did not intensify during that period. Finally, in France the reframing of immigration through the social welfare lens was not a result of the global financial crisis's impact, but was a means to reduce unqualified and unwanted family migration, which was set Sarkozy's immigration paradigm in 2006, before the crisis happened. However, global financial crisis played a role in Sarkozy's immigration approach by presenting an obstacle for Sarkozy to succeed in implementing his selective immigration strategy as the economic growth slowed and led to increased unemployment

***H6: The effects of the EU integration and widening of the EU community made the right-wing parties in power to pursue a more restrictive immigration stance.***

This impact of the EU integration on the redefinition of immigration policies was confirmed in the UK and in Switzerland, while in France it only led to the change in Sarkozy's immigration discourse, but did not lead to the actual immigration policy change. Hence, the eurosceptic attitudes of the SVP were driven by the loss of sovereignty to the EU, which, combined with economic concerns over EU migration, resulted in a major policy change - the Initiative Against Mass Migration. In the UK, effects of the EU integration were also concentrated around the lack of control over EU migration, which eventually led to Brexit, as immigration was one of the defining themes in Brexit debate. As in two other cases, in France, the EU variable also played a role, but a different one as Sarkozy was not concerned with the intra-EU migration, but more preoccupied with the lack of control of the EU's external border created anxieties about illegal migration from third countries to France through other member states, and had an influence on Sarkozy's eurosceptic discourse.

Cross-case comparison of the right-wing parties' immigration stances in the UK, Switzerland and France, gave grounds to suggest that causes of immigration policy change are not unique and can be extrapolated to the wider population of cases, and careful consideration of the context gives an explanatory power to suggest what accounts for the cross-case differences.

Despite some differences, the causes of immigration policy change of the right-wing parties in power in three cases are by and large similar, but the way that these causal factors are used by parties are different and context dependent. A comparison of the cases demonstrated that public opinion and perceived economic anxieties of the public were present across all three cases. The logic behind immigration policy change varied with regard to three factors: the effects of the EU integration, party competition on the right and perceived identity concerns of the public towards immigration.

The research has identified four factors of a national POS that explain the variation in causal factors that led right-wing parties in power to change their immigration stances. First, perceived identity anxieties were behind the logic of immigration policy change in Switzerland and France, who both shared the same assimilationist type of citizenship regime. The interviews found that in the UK they were not the underlying cause because UK belonged to multicultural type of regime, which recognised cultural differences and did not require assimilation to a host society. Second, the effects of the EU integration drove immigration policy stance of three parties differently, which is explained by the country's relationship with the EU. Both the SVP and the Conservatives share Euroscepticism, but to a different extent, though. Therefore, the effects of the EU integration, including EU enlargements had an impact on the immigration stances of these parties, while in France, UMP would see Europe as a platform to reinforce its power (Drake, 2011) and that conservative UMP in general would not view Europe as much a threat as the SVP or the Conservatives. Third, the POS factor that explains the variation in changing immigration stance of the conservative parties in three countries is party competition. During period studied, in France and in the UK, the radical right FN and UKIP were enjoying growing electoral fortunes and that had an impact on the radicalisation of the right-wing parties' positions on immigration. In Switzerland that did not occur because there was no credible right-wing competitor. Finally, the findings from the UK case contribute to the existing theories on party policy change by highlighting the new factors that led the UK Conservative Party to amend its immigration stance: Home Office's ideological dogmatism, which emphasises the importance of the agency in producing the change and the pressure from interest groups involved in immigration policy-making. Interest groups like MWUK were more successful in lobbying the UK Conservative Party than those of the educational sector such as the UUK because their objectives corresponded with those of the Home Office and because they had greater resources to influence the government through the right-wing media. The Home Office's control over agenda setting, evidence twisting and lack of communication among

governmental departments were instrumental in pursuing more restrictive immigration policies. Thus, this research does not only test the existing exogenous theories of party policy change, but also adds to them by pinpointing to the new factors that should be taken into account.

### *Causal mechanisms*

Second research question sought to provide an understanding to the process of immigration policy change, tracing the mechanisms that accounted for it. This research confirmed the presence of one theorised mechanism - framing. In all the cases framing was crucial in demonstrating right-wing parties' positions on immigration as it was the initial mechanism that lay ground for the actual policy-making mechanisms. Framing, which consisted of diagnostic and prognostic parts (Snow and Benford, 1988: 200-201) was used by the political parties to justify their immigration policy change. Three additional mechanisms were found across three cases that explain how the change happened. Thus, departmental competition was a mechanism in case of the UK and France, where institutional reshuffle originally led to the departmental competition, while in Switzerland direct democracy accounted for the change. The research has identified that one of the attributes of the national POS explained the variation in mechanisms that produced immigration policy change: type of democracy. Therefore, departmental competition could not be possible in the case of Switzerland based on its democracy model. Consensual model of democracy in Switzerland, which required general compromise between major political actors, and in the absence of this the SVP resorted to the (ab)use of direct democracy to change immigration policy in their direction. The SVP was able to influence and change Swiss immigration policy through a bottom-up approach, successfully using the instruments of direct democracy, which highlighted the importance of the agency in activating mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change in the Swiss case.

Cross-case comparative findings on causal mechanisms allow to make a careful suggestion that departmental competition, which envisages the rivalry or conflicts between different governmental departments, can be extrapolated to other cases of immigration policy change. Those departments that have the patronage of key political figures like the prime minister or the president have their ideas and their policy choices to dominate. The presence of this policy-making mechanism can be tested in the future research that examines policy change and is not only limited to immigration sphere. Finally, the research concluded that while structural factors were crucial in explaining party policy change, the role of the agency was key in the activation of the mechanisms that accounted for this change.

## **8.2 Implications**

The findings of this research provide both implications for theory and for policy process.

On a theoretical level, it investigates how existing theories on exogenous factors explain immigration policy change of right-wing parties in power and examines their application in three cases. Policy process implications focus on the interaction between different actors involved in immigration policy making and their strategies on pursuing their goals.

### ***8.2.1 Implications for theory***

The theoretical implications of this study are two-fold. The first part refers to the theories on party policy change, examining the explanatory role of exogenous causal factors that influence right-wing parties' positions. It offers insights into the causal factors that lead to immigration policy change in three cases, adding to existing party policy change theories by identifying new factors that are both agentic and structural. Thus, Home Office's ideological dogmatism and by operationalising large-scale changes such as the effects of the EU integration through EU enlargement. The identification of new factors is important because it broadens the explanations of why parties change their policies and the new factors identified in this research can be tested in other cases, where parties have changed or may change their immigration stances. The second relates to the scholarship on causal mechanisms, which account for the process of change, and illustrates how framing is a discursive mechanism in all three cases, but how its

application differs depending on the context and the factors that are pertinent to each case. The study contributes to the theories on mechanisms by identifying new mechanisms such as departmental competition and direct democracy, derived from the case studies, suggesting that some of them might be generalisable to other cases as well. The research contributes to the literature on political parties and immigration by bridging theories of party policy change with theories on causal mechanisms, which together are necessary for providing a full explanation of *what* causes the policy change and *how* the change occurs.

The choice to address party policy change focusing on factors external to the party is explained by the limitations of agency related explanations, that account only for internal party factors. Such agency-related theories (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Janda et al., 1995; Harmel and Tan, 2003) are not sufficient because parties are not immune to external pressures, which affect their decision-making. As pinpointed by Partos and Bale (2014) internal drivers are not able to explain everything and external shocks should be supplemented with other factors than just loss of office. This research does not suggest that theories that emphasise the importance of agency factors are flawed, rather that they are unable to yield sufficient explanations of party policy change. Therefore, this study focused primarily on the examination of external causes that underpin the decision-making processes of right-wing parties in power on immigration as the outcome is context dependent (Faletti and Lynch, 2009). By examining the context in three cases, the research identified four factors of a national POS that explain the variation behind the logic of three right-wing parties in power on immigration. This brings added value to the research on party policy change because it enables to identify the direction of immigration positions other right-wing parties that operate in similar contexts.

### *Causes*

The right-wing parties in power change on immigration can be explained through a range of exogenous factors. This research tested existing theories on party policy change and found that party competition on the right, the importance of public opinion and high



salience of immigration makes the right-wing parties in power adopt more a restrictive immigration stance and subsequently leads to the change in immigration policies. This research has not only tested the existing theories, but also provided a conceptualisation to the theory of global economic change (Adams et al., 2009) which states that right-wing parties in power are more prone to react to global economic change by altering their policy positions. Global economic change was operationalised through the lens of the global financial crisis, which served as a critical juncture. The findings suggest that some right-wing parties in power do not alter their immigration policy positions as a response to global economic change and that this can be explained with a reference to the economic context in which policy change is happening. Thus, while the global financial crisis led to the toughening of immigration rhetoric in France and the UK, it did not happen in Switzerland, where the economy suffered less during the crisis and where there has not been much change in SVP's rhetoric, which was restrictive on immigration even before the crisis. This finding implies that a critical junctures' influence on party's positions can depend on the nature and consistency of the discourse that the party had before, meaning that if the party's rhetoric has been quite restrictive before the critical juncture happened, it is likely that critical juncture will not have a major influence on party's position. However, the Swiss case findings are not sufficient for modification of the theory on global economic change and the suggestion that parties respond differently need to be tested in the other cases before refining the theory. While something like global financial crisis promoted different reactions of the right-wing parties in power with regard to their immigration stance, the findings in three cases suggest that more generally, economic concerns were a driver of more restrictive immigration policies.

It is suggested in the literature that political and socio-economic change makes parties alter their policy positions as they need to adjust to the change (Fagerholm, 2015). While this suggestion stands, it has not been conceptualised in the literature on exogenous factors of party policy change. In the context of immigration policy and within the timeframe, this research proposed to conceptualise this political change as the widening

of the EU and its impact of the EU on immigration policies of nation states. The findings suggest that in the UK and Swiss cases, the widening of the EU has brought primarily economic anxieties, which partially led to the major critical junctures like Brexit in the UK and the Initiative Against Mass Migration in Switzerland. By operationalising this change as an EU enlargement variable, this research traced another exogenous factor that influenced the mainstream's right position on immigration.

Apart from conceptualising some theoretical suggestions into specific variables, this work expanded on the range of causal factors that lead right-wing parties in power to change their positions on immigration. The analysis of interview data demonstrated that there are other factors that were responsible for the redefinition of immigration policies in a more restrictive way. One of them, identity concerns emerged in the cases of France and Switzerland, where these kinds of anxieties concentrated around the issues of Islam and Muslim integration into French and Swiss societies. While in the UK, despite its colonial history and diverse immigration background, these anxieties were not shaping British immigration policy between 2005 and 2015, in France and Switzerland they were crucial. Hence, theories on party position change on the issue of immigration, can be complemented by identity anxieties with future theory focusing on what accounts for some parties accounting for these concerns, while others ignoring them. This research explained that differences in incorporating identity anxieties as drivers of immigration policy change depends on the citizenship regime of the country. While both the UK and France are former colonial empires, right-wing parties' choices differ in two cases, because the UK represents multiculturalism relative to France or Switzerland, while France represents civic-assimilationist type. Findings from the Swiss case only reaffirm the importance of citizenship regime in accounting for identity anxieties because Switzerland also belongs the cases with assimilationist approach to integration. Switzerland and France share this characteristic and identity concerns come high up on the agenda for the right-wing parties in those countries.

In addition to the exogenous factors that have been tested in this research, the analysis of immigration policy change in the UK case sheds the light on the agency related factor that was crucial in explaining the evolution of British immigration policy in a restrictive direction. Home Office's ideological dogmatism, which manifested itself in the control over agenda setting and evidence, led to the domination of more restrictive policy choices as the Home Office and the home secretary had Prime Minister's patronage on the issue. This finding highlights that theories that explain party position change from agency related explanations (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Janda et al., 1995; Harmel and Tan, 2003) should consider a new dimension of the political patronage of powerful party actors that make some policy choices prevail over the other ones.

### *Mechanisms*

While theories of party policy change trace the causal factors that lead to the change in parties' positions, they do not fully account for *how* the change happens, examining the mechanisms that explain this change. They address the causes, but not always the mechanisms. This research not only explores the causes that influence immigration policies of right-wing parties in power, it also traces the mechanisms that explain the process of the change and examines how these mechanisms operate depending on the context, and whether they produce the same policy outcome in different cases. This research addressed this gap in immigration policy making in three cases: UK, Switzerland and France, pointing to mechanisms that account for the change. While the presence of framing (Goffman, 1974; Rydgren, 2003; Snow and Bedford, 1988) as a mechanism has been established in all three cases, process tracing identified the mechanisms that accounted for the actual policy-making process: departmental competition and direct democracy, which adds to the array of existing causal mechanisms (Faletti and Lynch, 2009: 8). Cross-case findings suggest that in policy-making, the nature of mechanism activation and operation does not only depend on the context, but also on the agency, focusing on resources that political actors responsible for policy making possess.

### *Euroscepticism*

Finally, this research also contributed to the literature on Euroscepticism (Boomgarden et al., 2011; Kuhn, 2012; Meijers, 2017; Usherwood, 2013; Usherwood and Startin, 2012). It explored the impact of the supranational entities like the EU on the development of the national immigration policies. It identified that even though the effects of the EU integration were present in all three cases, and were an important factor in the evolution of immigration policy stances of right-wing parties in power, the challenges and anxieties the EU factor brought were different and context dependent. While in the UK and in Switzerland, the major challenges that emerged from the effects of the EU integration were the free movement of people and the necessity of cohesion between the EU law and the national laws, which subsequently led to major critical junctures like Brexit and the Initiative Against Mass Migration. In France, the effects of the EU integration were presented through a border issue, more specifically the control of the EU external borders and illegal immigration. This research demonstrated that there is a two-way relationship between the EU and the nation states and that not only supranational EU can have an adaptational pressure on the development of the immigration policies in three countries, but also that domestic changes within the states structure the relationship with the EU as evidenced by Brexit and the Initiative Against Mass Migration.

#### ***8.2.2 Implications for policy process***

The findings of this research are relevant to the various actors involved in policy making, including politicians, special advisors and interest groups by shedding the light on the process of immigration policy making in three cases. This thesis addressed immigration decision-making process of right-wing parties in power, but the implications for policy-making process can go beyond immigration and can be extrapolated onto other policy areas. It is important to highlight that this research did not aim to make any policy recommendations as it did not study policy outcomes, but focused on policy outputs, or on the process of policy-making and how certain policy choices prevailed over the other

ones. This study provides implications for policy process, exploring how right-wing parties in power came up with a particular view on immigration and how these ideas were translated into policy outputs. Some implications are country specific and some vary across cases. One of the implications that actors involved in policy process can learn is the significance of competition between different departments and actors and that the ability to remove or neutralise other actors depends on the nature of the political system, which explains where power resources lie. Findings from the UK and France suggest that the same mechanism of departmental competition can be generalised to other cases as it produced a similar outcome in different political systems: parliamentary and semi-presidential democracies. It does not matter what kind of democracy it is, what matters that those actors who possess bigger resources and have support of those actors responsible for policy-making process, get their policy choices to dominate.

#### *How existing theoretical framework can be used in the future research*

Future studies on the role of political parties in the process of policy change can use existing theoretical frameworks, which combine previous research on factors that make parties change their policy positions with the additional factors found in this study. Therefore, future research should test for the exogenous factors that were operationalised and tested in this work and examine if they have an impact on the parties' policy stances. Future research should not necessarily focus on immigration policy in other cases and the impact of these factors on other issues, as the factors discussed in this research are not necessarily restricted to particular policy issues. This research explored how external factors led to party policy change through the lens of immigration, but exogenous factors like the global financial crisis, the effects of the EU integration, party competition, ideological dogmatism of governmental departments can be equally applied to study other policy areas. The same logic follows the mechanisms that account for policy change. New cases on party position change and subsequent policy change should test for the mechanisms traced in this research. Thus, departmental competition between different governmental and societal actors can also be extrapolated on the other

cases of decision-making processes and future studies could examine if the operation of these mechanisms produces the same outcomes or different ones, depending on the context in which mechanisms are activated by political actors.

### **8.3 Generalisability of findings**

From a methodological point of view, generalisations are not possible with process tracing, which only provides within-case inferences. However, the inability of process tracing to yield cross case inferences and generalise to the population of cases (Beach and Pedersen, 2013) can be overcome by the comparison of findings across three cases, which can produce certain explanations, which give grounds to suggest that it can be extrapolated to the population of cases. Comparative findings suggest that causes of immigration policy change are broadly similar in three countries, which, to a certain extent, can be generalised to other cases as well. This should also be tested in other cases. Process tracing is the method that enables the researcher to trace the mechanisms that cannot be derived from statistical research and certain generalisations about mechanisms become possible given the comparison of findings across three cases.

### **8.4 Suggestions for further research**

This study has explored immigration policy change of the right-wing parties in power from an exogenous perspective, which in the context of agency versus structure debate, emphasises the importance of structural, contextual factors in explaining the logic of the change. The research does not completely disregard the role of the agency, but pinpoints that context is crucial in explaining the outcome. Future research can contribute both theoretically and empirically to the scholarship on right-wing parties in power and immigration policy change.

From a theoretical perspective, future research can complement this explanation by examining the role of the agency of political parties and civil servants, who at times, can

become too politicised, in the process of policy change, which will provide a complete understanding of immigration policy-making logic by focusing also on agency's role in it. Even though, some research (Bale, 2013; Bale and Partos, 2014; Gruber and Bale, 2014) has already addressed the issue in the British case, particularly with a reference to immigration policy, however, it explored only a limited range of agency factors, which can be extended by further research. Future studies can focus on the role of agency in immigration decision-making in Switzerland and France, exploring how intra-party dynamics lead to certain policy choices to prevail over the other ones. Furthermore, new avenues can address the role of non-governmental stakeholders such as pressure groups, ethnic groups, trade organisations, unions, involved in immigration policy making, exploring why some of them are more successful in lobbying their ideas to governmental actors than others.

As immigration became one of the most salient issues in politics, parties on both sides of the ideological spectrum cannot disregard the issue and need to address it in one way or another. While this research examined exogenous factors that influence party policy change of right-wing parties in power, future studies can focus on parties on the other side of the ideological spectrum, mainstream left parties to examine if the factors that underpin their immigration policy logic are different. This will help to see if the right-wing and left-wing parties share some of the factors and to investigate what accounts for the variation in their immigration policy responses. Such research would not only bring contribution to the theories of party policy change, but would refine them by providing a typology of exogenous factors that account for party position depending on the ideological side.

From an empirical perspective, new avenues for future research are provided by critical junctures like Brexit in the UK and the Initiative Against Mass Migration in Switzerland which add a new dimension to the research on Euroscepticism, focusing on political parties and their efforts to use certain policy areas like immigration to undermine their

relationship with the EU. While this study examined the top-down approach, exploring national states' responses to the EU, future studies can focus on a bottom-up approach, examining the impact of national immigration debates on the EU dimension, how national states responses to the EU adaptational pressure lead to the application of EU policies in these European states. Finally, it opens avenues for studies on Britain and the EU, which can explore how critical junctures like Brexit affect the policy-making process within the party and how different factions within the Conservative Party reconcile their contrasting interests and shape the future policy.

This thesis aimed to answer, first, what causal factors led right-wing parties in power in the UK, Switzerland and France to toughen their immigration stances and subsequently change their immigration policy. Second, this research sought to trace causal mechanisms that accounted for this change. It demonstrated that the causes of immigration policy change in three cases are broadly the same as parties had similar concerns about immigration, but that these exogenous factors were used differently by three parties, depending on the context in which the change was happening. It also established that framing, departmental competition, and direct democracy were the mechanisms that accounted for immigration policy change in three cases. Comparison of cases highlighted that the ideas of those departments prevailed and won that had bigger resources and support of the executive. The findings highlight the importance of accounting for the context, which provides opportunities and constraints for political parties to exploit these factors differently in the process of immigration decision-making. Despite the variation in parties' positions on immigration, the research did not offer three separate explanations, but, by comparing the findings across the cases, sought to demonstrate that some of the causes and the mechanisms might be generalisable to the other cases, which can be tested in the future research.



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### **British interviews**

Interview with David Metcalf, the chair of the MAC, London 2015.

Interview with a Conservative minister, Manchester, 2015.

Interview with a Conservative MP, London, 2015.

Interview with a Conservative MP, London, 2015.

Interview with a former SpAD to a Conservative Minister, Belfast 2015.

Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, London, 2015.

Interview with a senior Home Office civil servant, Croydon, 2015.

Interview with a Home Office civil servant, telephone interview, 2015.

Interview with a representative of the MWUK, London, 2015.

Interview with a representative of the MWUK, telephone interview, 2015.

Interview with a representative of the UUK, London, 2016.

Interview with the former secretary of the state for BIS, Vince Cable, Twickenham, 2016.

### **French interviews**

Interview with Sarkozy's former adviser, Paris, 2016.

Interview with a UMP MP, Paris, 2016.

Interview with a UMP MP, Paris, 2016.

Interview with a former head of the Office for territorial, social and cultural integration in the

Ministry of the Interior, Marie-José Bernardot, Paris, 2016.

Interview with the current French prime minister, Edouard Philippe, Paris, 2016.

Interview with a former regional director of FASILD and ACSE, Frederic Callens, Paris, 2016.

### **Swiss interviews**

Interview with a national councillor, Alise Glauser, Yverdon-les-Bains, 2016.

Interview with a national councillor, Claudio Zanetti, Zurich, 2016.

Interview with a national councillor, Sebastian Frehner, Basel, 2016.

Interview with a national councillor, Andreas Glarner, Oberwil-Lieli, 2016.

Interview with a national councillor, Heinz Brand, Berne, 2016.

Interview with a national councillor and former vice-president of the SVP, Luzi Stamm, Baden- Dättwil, 2016.

Interview with a former national councillor, Hanz Fehr, Zurich, 2016.

Interview with a former national councillor, Ulrich Schlüer, Zurich, 2016.

Interview with a co-president of the Valais cantonal branch, Cyrille Fauchère, Fribourg, 2016.

Interview with a secretary-general of the Vaud cantonal branch, Kevin Grangier, Lausanne, 2016.

Interview with a social policy professor at the University of Lausanne, Giuliano Bonoli, Lausanne, 2016.

Interview with Geneva's municipal councillor, Eric Bertinat, Geneva, 2016.

Interview with Jérômê Desmeules, 2016, co-president of Valais cantonal branch, Sion, 2016.

Interview with a personal secretary to the State secretary of the State Secretariat for Migration, Stefan Däpp, Berne, 2016.

Interview with the president of the Federal Commission for Migration, Walter Leimgruber, Basel, 2016.

Interview with the vice-president of the Federal Commission for Migration, Etienne Piguet, Lausanne, 2016.

## **Appendix A**

### **Information for participants**

**Project: Conservative parties and immigration: evidencing and explaining policy change in the UK, Switzerland and France between 2002 and 2015**

**Researcher:** Anna McKeever (PhD Candidate, School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy)

**Supervisory team:** Prof. Cathy Gormley-Heenan and Dr. Markus Ketola, Dr. Ciaran Burke

#### **Invitation**

You are being invited to take part in a research study. It is important that you understand what the research is about and what you will be asked to do. Please read the following information and do not hesitate to ask any questions. Thank you for taking the time to consider this invitation.

#### **What is the purpose of the research?**

The research aims to understand the logic underpinning the shifts in immigration policy between 2002 and 2015. The project seeks to answer the following key questions: 1) How has immigration and asylum policy changed in the UK/Switzerland/France? 2) Why has policy change taken place? 3) What mechanisms accounted for this change?

#### **What is the contribution of the project?**

The project will contribute to the current debates on the variance of the European approaches to the on-going immigration crisis in Europe, by drawing on the similarities and differences in the evolution of public policy within three European countries - UK, France, and Switzerland – as a consequence of the interplay between local, national and European politics.

#### **Why have I been chosen?**

You have been chosen as a potential interviewee for this research due to your background and work in the relevant political/policy-making field and your work/influence on immigration policy in the UK/Switzerland/France.

#### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

You will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher in order to answer a series of questions on immigration policy and/or positions of your political party. You will be provided with a consent form and be asked to complete it, which will outline the use of the research data which will be collected during the course of the interview by the researcher. The interviews will be audio-recorded, with your permission.

#### **What do I have to do?**

You are asked to respond to the questions asked in the interview as honestly and comprehensibly as possible. Please remember you will be given full anonymity. You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time and discontinue your participation in the project at any time without penalty.

#### **Are there any risks?**

Information provided during the interview, including the attached consent form will be securely stored and your name will not be made public. All work is conducted within the code of practice and data protection policy of Ulster University. The data will be stored securely for ten years in accordance with the University's policy. The objectives, methodology and ethical considerations of this research have been reviewed and fully approved by an ethics committee within Ulster University. If you have any queries in



relation to this ethical approval, you can contact Ulster University Research Governance Department for further details.

**Are there any possible benefits in taking part?**

You may view your contribution to the research and its subsequent dissemination and possible contribution to the academic and public debate on immigration as a possible benefit to taking part in the research.

**What will happen to the results of the study?**

The results of the study will be published in a form of a Doctoral Dissertation. They are expected to be published in 2017 by Ulster University. If possible, the results will be published by academic publisher and disseminated to the public. The results can possibly lead to further research on the topic.

**Who is organising and funding the research?**

The research is organised by a research team that includes a PhD student and her supervisors. The research has been funded by Ulster University.

**Contact**

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## Appendix B

### Consent Form

**Project:** Right-wing parties in power and immigration: evidencing and explaining policy change in the UK, Switzerland and France between 2002 and 2015

**Researcher:** Anna McKeever

**Supervisor:** Prof. Cathy Gormley-Heenan

**Supervisor:** Dr. Markus Ketola

**Supervisor:** Dr. Ciaran Burke

Completion of this form indicates the signatory's consent to take part in the above mentioned PhD research project being conducted at the School of Criminology, Politics and Social Policy.

I confirm that I have been given and have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have asked and received answers to any questions raised.  
[ ]

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without my rights being affected in any way.  
[ ]

I understand that the researchers will hold all information and data collected securely and in confidence and that the researcher ensures that I cannot be identified as a participant in the study. I understand that my name will not be made public and, therefore, I give permission for the researchers to hold relevant data.  
[ ]

I agree to take part in the above study [ ]

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***Name of Participant***

***Signature***

***Date***

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***Name of Researcher***

***Signature***

***Date***

## **Appendix C**

### **Sample Topic Guide**

#### **Questions:**

SVP has been a key player in Swiss politics in general, but particularly when it comes to immigration. In general, would you say that the party has been successful in achieving its goals (what are the main achievements) over the last ten years?

Are there divisions/tensions between different factions of the party regarding immigration and asylum? I mean, is there a division between economic liberals (business interests, more open labour market) and social conservatives?

When SVP talks about limiting migration, does the party distinguish between EU and non-EU migration? If yes, how? If yes, what kind of migration it is more important to reduce? There are currently quotas on foreigners who come from non-EU and non-EFTA countries. Does the Party favour further tightening of the quotas for non-EU and non-EFTA migrants?

Picking up on different types of migration, is it more important to limit one particular route than another. Follow up: or is it more important to limit overall migration? If it is more important to limit one particular route than the other, what are the concerns that drive the limitation of a particular route?

SVP has been opposing closer ties with the EU and is opposed to further EU integration. What concerns have been driving such opposition? What are the main concerns, what are the main area SVP is concerned about when opposing the EU? To what extent this kind of attitudes are motivated by the concerns about national identity, welfare, economic worries, Europeanisation?

In 2005 parliamentary session the Parliament accepted several amendments proposed by the SVP regarding immigration, to the Law on foreigners, they were introduced while Christoph Blocher was a head of FDJP?

In 2007 the SVP has launched the Initiative Against the Construction of Minarets. Were there any particular events that triggered that? What were the concerns of the party?

The relationship between the political system and policy change: has the political system, and in particular, direct democracy make it easier or more difficult to implement changes in immigration and asylum policy? How important is direct democracy is an instrument that can change public opinion?

Did global financial crisis have any impact on the Swiss budget in terms of reduction of the welfare?

The SVP has been the most popular party in the last ten years, but it is hard to pass the legislation because it does not have the absolute majority in the Parliament. However, do you agree on certain immigration and asylum issues with other right-wing parties, (like the PLR). Has the situation changed over the last ten years? Is it easier to agree now or more difficult or the same?

Although the Swiss economy is relatively well off and unemployment is relatively low compared with other European countries (4.7%), many Swiss people worry about the effects of immigration. What are the main concerns?

SVP has long been arguing about the reduction of migration. Is it somehow connected with any economic hardship that Switzerland had suffered when Global financial crisis has hit in 2008? Has SVP rhetoric regarding the reduction of migration intensify during the economic crisis? If yes, what were the main concerns?

The party started to collect the signature for the Initiative Against Mass Migration in 2011. What triggered that? Why the Party did not do it earlier if it has been opposing migration for a long time? Follow up: Does it mean that EU and Europeanisation have come as a key factor that influenced SVP's decision on launching the Initiative? In what way?

Swiss government just recently announced (beginning of March) that it might use unilateral safeguard clause to curb migration. The Swiss cabinet has proposed to use a unilateral safeguard clause to curb immigration if it is unable to reach agreement with the European Union on limiting influxes of foreigners. What are your thoughts on the issue?

The Initiative Against Mass Migration. No details of the proposal have been announced yet, apart from the fact that the proposed unilateral safeguard clause provides for annual limits to be set by the cabinet on the number of permits issued to people from EU and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries if immigration exceeds a certain threshold. However, apart from the reintroduction of quotas, there was also a requirement for national preference when filling a job and restriction of immigrants' rights to social benefits. Have these two latter requirements been taking into consideration? If no, why?

The new plan will apply to all types of immigrants? Are cross-border workers a problem for Switzerland? If yes, how? Will the new clause apply to students?

In February 2016, Swiss people rejected the Initiative for Expelling Criminal Foreigners (Implementation), which meant that there was a list of crimes, a catalogue, according to which the person can be send back to their home country. Will the Party pursue any further attempts to pass this legislation?

EU impact/Europeanisation. How does the party view future relationship with the EU? In case of implementing unilateral safeguard clause, EU would probably want to review the bilateral agreements. The SVP really only opposes free movement bilateral agreement? Or any others? What will be the cooperation between the EU and CH?

Is the so-called 'welfare tourism' more applied to certain categories of migrants, in the view of the party and the government?

Right after the February 2014 referendum, Switzerland refused to signed the extension of the free movement of people with Croatia. However, in the beginning of March 2016, the agreement with Croatia has been signed? What influenced this change in Switzerland's position? Was the extension of the free border zone with Croatia an attempt to smooth things with the EU? SVP did not welcome this decision, but said it will not pursue launching the initiative against it. Why so? What are the concerns behind it?

## Appendix D

### Example of the Codebook

First cycle coding	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the theme	Examples
<b>Party competition on the right (theory-driven code)</b>	This node addresses Conservatives' changing position on immigration as a result of increasing electoral pressure from UKIP, when the Conservative party tightens its policies and proposes new policies as a way of trying to prevent its right-wing electorate from alienating to the radical right.	Mentioning of UKIP, other parties' positions on the issue, losing electoral base, elections, extremists, election results.	<i>Well, they were attached to it because they were frightened of competition from right-wing parties like UKIP. Because they had some of their own supporters, kind of nationalist.</i>
<b>Shifts in public opinion (theory-driven code)</b>	The theme concerns the impact of public opinion on Conservatives' immigration discourse and policy change. It examines whether the Conservatives included public opinion as a factor while determining the context of their policies and whether they were worried about losing the public. Also it describes the specific concerns of the public, related to immigration that Conservatives thought were important to address in their immigration policies.	referencing to public concern, public debate, general election, perceptions, British people, public, electorate, or phrases, where these words are not explicitly mentioned, but where it is implied that public opinion was important while considering how immigration discourse and policies should be developed	<i>People here get very angry when they read that some Polish people have been here, working here and then they get back to Poland and they get family allowance and it creates a lot of anger. So, and I think you have to deal with that, those kind of abuses, otherwise you lose the public.</i>

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<b>Global financial crisis (theory-driven code)</b>	The impact of the global financial crisis on immigration debate. Whether immigration discourse became more restrictive as a result of global financial crisis and subsequent Eurozone crisis. Is there a connection between global financial crisis and welfare reduction, whether welfare was aimed to be reduced based on the impact of Eurozone crisis on the British economy. Did austerity brought by global financial crisis have an impact on the intertwining of welfare rhetoric with immigration?	referencing to Eurozone crisis, recession, economic growth, austerity, unemployment, economy, work migration, welfare, jobs, economic success, low-paid work.	<i>It is quite simply the economic collapse in many southern European Eurozone countries. The HUGE numbers of Spanish, Italians in particular came here because even in the hight of the recession it was easier to find a job here, in Britain, than it was in Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, Ireland as well to an extent. So, a lot of them came here.</i>
<b>Effects of the EU integration</b>	The theme concerns the changing pace of immigration because of the EU's free movement of people, absence of transitional controls with A8 EU countries. It also addresses competition on the labour market and anxieties about welfare benefits given to EU migrants. Finally, it is about the impact of EU law on the UK's law.	Poles, Bulgaria, Romania, East European migration, EU migration, work migration, Europe, EU referendum, increasing numbers of EU migrants, EU, welfare concerns over EU migrants, EU national, benefits.	<i>I think there was a clear moment that it was seen that the transitional arrangements for new countries joining the EU was a lack of safeguard or control asked by Britain in the negotiations about the accession of the new countries.</i>

First cycle coding	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the theme	Examples
<b>Influence of interest groups (data-driven code)</b>	When the issue becomes increasingly salient, media coverage becomes more extensive. It examines whether the saliency of immigration, portrayed by right-wing media influenced the Conservatives' position on the issue, by making it more restrictive. It investigates whether the salience of certain immigration debates was increased because of interest groups lobbying.	right-wing media, lobbying, newspapers, electoral issue, electoral concern, rising numbers, high pressure, campaigning about immigration.	<i>There was a lot of propaganda and that newspapers like The Daily Mail, which is quite prominent on this issue were given information in support of their argument.</i>
<b>Home Office's ideological dogmatism (data-driven code)</b>	It describes Home Office's role in decision making process, its views, interactions with different departments and other actors involved in immigration policy-making. It examines the approach that the Home Office and the Home Secretary had on immigration.	any mentioning of the Home Office and the home secretary, the work Migration Advisory Committee, differences between the Home Office and other different departments, evidence on different aspects of immigration, including pros and cons,	<i>And also, the home secretary only asks the MAC the questions that she wants to.</i>

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<b>Mechanisms</b>	This code identifies different pathways through which immigration policy was defined and made. It explores how various actors tried to influence the rhetoric of the Conservative party and subsequently how this translated into more restrictive immigration policies. Interactions between various actors involved in immigration policy making.	Actions or behaviour of various actors involved in immigration policy-making, describing in what way they were advocating their views, interaction between different actors,	<i>They weren't interested in discussion of the document, they were interested in obedience. And they used the fact that they had a special line to the Home Secretary to say that: "Look, I know that this is what she wants – do it, ok?". That's it. I found it very frustrating and annoying'</i>